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# Light from the Cross.

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## SERMONS

ON THE

## PASSION OF OUR LORD.

Translated from the German

DR. A. THOLUCK,<sup>OF</sup>

UNIVERSITY-PREACHER AND PROFESSOR OF THEOLOGY IN THE UNIVERSITY OF HALLE.

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## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

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THE Discourses contained in this volume are selected from the fourth and fifth volumes of Dr. Tholuck's Sermons. They were originally delivered in the University service at Halle, where Dr. Tholuck is preacher to the University. From the character of the congregation on such occasions—which is, of course, composed to a large extent of students—the Sermons will be found to have often a special reference to the case of young men. It is hoped that they will also in this form be found useful to students, and to thoughtful, inquiring *young men* generally; and that they will thus help to supply a want in our existing Christian literature. May the picture which they present of the suffering Saviour be blessed to draw many such to him “who bore our sins in his own body on the tree!”

The Sermons were not, however, addressed exclusively to the students. A large, promiscuous congregation is always present at those services, to enjoy the privilege of hearing one of the greatest preachers

of the age. Consequently all classes and all ages may expect to find in these discourses something to quicken and to bless;—rich thoughts drawn from the mine of Truth—deep, far-reaching glances into the heart of man—and such an insight into the heart of Jesus in the hours of his sufferings, as is vouchsafed not to learning or philosophy, but to humble faith alone. Dr. Tholuck is well known in our country as an erudite theologian and an able expositor of sacred truth. But commentaries do not teach us much of a man's true nature, or open up his hidden life. These Sermons will convey some idea of those pulpit ministrations of Dr. Tholuck, by which he exercises so mighty and hallowed an influence. We trust that in them, even though it be through the medium of a translation, he may still speak with power to many a heart.

R. L. B.

HALLE, January, 1857.

## PART I.

### THE CROSS A REVEALER OF THE HEARTS OF MEN.

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#### SERMON I.

THE APPEARANCE OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE FLESH IS THE TEST WHICH TRIES AND BRINGS TO LIGHT WHAT IS IN EVERY HUMAN HEART.

LUKE ii. 34, 35.—And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) *that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

THOSE of you, my brethren, who have had opportunities of associating much with true believers, must have observed that it had become a kind of habit with them to say, in reference to any remarkable event in the Christian life, “Thus has this or that saying of Scripture again proved true.” This was a common practice with the Apostles, who often refer to sayings of the Old Testament in this way. Now, the truth which this circumstance brings very strongly before one’s mind is, that the word of God holds good in every age of the world’s history. And, particularly, what we read in the Bible, of the way God deals with men, and men with God—and in a very special way, at the

time of the appearance of our Lord—is of such a character as we often see recurring in history. As we contemplate the course of events, and,

“By the light His words disclose,  
Watch Time’s full river as it flows,”

we often have occasion to exclaim, “Thus has this or that New Testament Scripture again proved true.” In our service of to-day, an expression of this nature shall engage our attention. It is a Scripture-saying, whose truth was first established in the history of Christ, and which the experience of every subsequent age has confirmed. I purpose to make our present meditation the introduction to a series of connected discourses, such as I have long entertained the wish to hold.

You will find our text in the prophetic words of the aged Simeon, spoken when the child Jesus was for the first time brought into the temple by his parents, in the days of the legal purification. We read in Luke ii. 34, 35, *“And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”* I scarcely think a more solemn scene, or one bearing more clearly on the face of it a character of perfect truthfulness, can be conceived, than the one into which these words of the Evangelist transport us. The very thought of the little circle gathered round the holy child Jesus, is itself deeply affecting. Those were assembled there

who, as we read, at that time “waited for the consolation of Israel.” And so it was a little company, gathered together from among the multitudes in Jerusalem, composed of men whose lives were one ardent longing, one strong never-fading hope, and the object of whose longing and hope was, that “the salvation of Israel would come out of Zion, and that the Lord would bring back the captivity of his people.” Their number was, to all appearance, small, and they were all, probably, pretty old and well-stricken in years—at least Simeon and Anna were. Touching is it also to think that they had been wont often to meet together in that very Temple for the purpose of uniting in prayer. The knowledge that one of their number had received the promise that he should not die until he had seen the Lord’s Christ, would, moreover, strengthen the faith and nourish the hope of all that little company. And now as they were together in the Temple, behold, the child of God, the object of their longing and prayers, draws near, borne in the arms of his mother. But how are they to recognize the promised child? A Holy One is there, but no nimbus surrounds his brow; a king, but no diadem wreathes his head. The grace of God disclosed him, and to Simeon’s heart he was revealed. Then it was that Simeon, under the power of the Holy Ghost, advanced, and took up the word of prophecy. He significantly addressed his words, not to the father of the child, but to his mother. It was no pleasant flattering speech he made; it was no light laughing dream of victory he foretold. O no! He calls the

child a rock—a rock on which a part of Israel shall be broken. There was further unveiled before his prophetic eye a sword which should pierce the sorrow-laden heart of the mother—“*that the thoughts of many hearts might be revealed!*” These words, which form the conclusion of his prophecy, were thus to have special reference to the time when the mother’s heart was to be pierced by a sword; or, in other words, the thoughts of many hearts are revealed in a preëminent degree beneath the cross of Christ. But they were also true of the whole period of the manifestation of God in the flesh. The thought, which shall form the basis of this and the following discourses, then is:

*The appearance of Jesus Christ is the test which first truly tries and brings to light what is in every human heart.*

Let us consider how this truth is established, first generally, and then especially in the *history of our Saviour’s Passion*.

First then, in general, the appearance of Jesus Christ in the flesh is the test of the human heart which alone truly tries and brings to light what is in every man. There are some men who possess the gift of being able to discover at the first glance the character of any man they may happen to meet—of course the art of knowing one’s-self is always much harder to learn. What do we mean by the phrase when we say that “a man has something in him”? By this, we do not mean merely to say that a man has talent and abilities, but we refer rather to the use he makes of those abilities:

we do not think so much of what a man *has*, but rather of what he *is*. It is the disposition, the will of which we speak. And this is what the Scriptures speak of, when we read "that what is in men is revealed" through Christ; for, according to the words of our Lord, it is out of the heart that bad thoughts proceed, and it is of the thoughts and imaginations of the heart that it is said, "they are evil from his youth." Now, what is "in a man," that is, what his heart is, is determined by what he loves. The worth of a man is determined by the nature of the objects which he loves. For people love only that which has some affinity to themselves, that in which they find themselves as it were reproduced. What you are worth is determined by what you love. Now, the great object of human love is God. He is the ineffable portion of the soul, the blessing above all blessings, the centre and source of every good thing, and He, above all and before all, deserves our love. This we all acknowledge, and who does not? But is there any one that says, Thou lovest him, and yet thou lovest him not? Is not the love we feel to Him hidden and invisible like himself? Is it not that sacred thing which the soul cherishes in silence and in solitude, within the secret recesses of her being? Now, in answer to this, I might say, that although it be true that the flame of love to God burns in secret upon the altar of the soul, still its brightness and its heat must be seen and felt; for love must manifest itself in outward actions. But I will content myself with asking, how can God be the subject of merely a secret, hidden love any more,

now that Christ has come into the world? "Whosoever loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him," says the Apostle. "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." We may make a thousand professions of our love to the unseen God, and yet so long as we have no fellow-feeling for those whom he has renewed and made reflections of his grace and truth, our speeches are but as the sounding brass and the tinkling cymbal. Brethren, you denounce the conduct of the man who steels his heart against his brother, against him in whose veins the same blood flows. You call him inhuman, because he dishonours the name and the memory of their common father; you say that name, that memory, cannot truly be the object of his love. And I ask, can we truly love our Heavenly Father, and at the same time close our heart against that brother in whom the very Spirit of grace and truth by whom we are renewed dwells and rules. Farther, I say, our love, not only to the brethren, but also towards every one in whom we can trace, it may be, nothing more than an earnest religious striving towards God, a moving of the heart towards God, is also a test by which is brought to light what is really in us. It is surely indisputably certain that all the longing of man towards God is fulfilled and satisfied in Christ alone. If this then be true, can we regard any human heart that is thirsting for light and life from God, otherwise than as a heart already standing in a certain relation to Christ? "He that is of God, heareth the voice of God," says Jesus, and in

these words he teaches that no man can find God in whose heart the Spirit of God is not already at work, and that no man can come to the Son but he whom the Father hath drawn. For Christ is the image of the invisible God—God manifest in the flesh; and John, at the age of eighty, can still with the fire of youthful enthusiasm exclaim: “We beheld His glory, the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” And again, in his Epistle: “The Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.” Now, if this is the truth with regard to Christ, if Christ is indeed the Life of God made manifest, the visible Son of the unseen Father, then it is unquestionably certain that, according to the love we have towards the Son, is the degree and the sincerity of our love towards the Father. For now that He is come into the world, who could say: “Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart;” now that He hath appeared in the flesh, who could say what no other human lips had dared to say before: “He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father;”—we must testify to the fact that the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth, is set up as a criterion whereby is tried and tested what our love to God is worth, what we ourselves are worth. We have heard prophetic words from the mouth of Simeon, which express this thought. Let us now listen to the same thought spoken by the Redeemer himself, by Him who was the humblest and the lowliest among the sons of men. The words to

which I am about to direct your attention are very remarkable words. When for the first time the thought they contain was unfolded before my mental eye, with what a marvellous power did it seize me! How appalled was I, when I thus learned to understand aright the real cause of all love to Christ, and of all turning from him! And in saying this, do I not express your own experience? We read in John: “And the Father himself which hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. *And ye have not his word abiding in you; for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not. I receive not honour from men, but I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.*” It may have escaped many of you what the real point of these words is, for the thoughts hang somewhat loosely together; but their meaning is plain. There can be no doubt that what the Lord here reproaches the Jews with is, that they do not love him, *because they have not the word of God abiding in them, because they have not the love of God in them.* And so he whom we reverence as the perfect pattern of humility, gives us here to know that to have the word of God in our heart, and truly to love God, and yet not feel ourselves drawn to him, experience no love to him, is a thing quite impossible. Nor is this the only passage where he announces this. We find other sayings of his expressive of the same truth. “Jesus said unto them, if God were your Father, ye would love me, for I proceeded forth and came from God.” And again: “Ye neither know me nor my Father: if ye had

known me, ye should have known my Father also." Then, were it not that in Christ, in this thorough union of the divine with the human, we see the manifestation of God himself, how, I ask, were it not for this, could we reconcile with his humility the high degree of love which he demands? "He that loveth father or mother more than me," he says, "is not worthy of me." What mere mortal has ever laid claim to such a love as this? I may thus rest upon the words of Christ himself, and not merely upon the words of Simeon, this statement, which I utter with the firmest conviction of its truth, that the *degree in which a man is attracted, ravished, overpowered, by the appearance of Christ in the flesh, is the measure of his love to God.*

You do not think that it makes any difference that He is no longer visible to our bodily sight? For is not the word "we have seen His glory" ever fresh, ever new upon the earth? Or did that glory die away, when the last eye-witness of his majesty was laid in the tomb? This might have been possible had his glory been a thing which the eyes of the body alone ever could have seen; but such it was not. Caiaphas saw with bodily eyes, and yet did he really *see?* They have eyes, but see not, Jesus himself said. Only with spiritual eyes could men see his glory in those days; and with spiritual eyes alone can we see his glory now. And that even now we can thus behold it is surely a proof of the inspiration of the sacred Evangelists. If it be true that these things which they tell us of Christ, come home to the

believers of every century with all their original power; if men living nineteen centuries after Christ are as deeply impressed by them as they who were eye-witnesses of them were; if, at this day, any one who reads the words of Christ is forced to exclaim, like those who heard them: "Never man spake like this man;"—can, I ask, any other proof than this be required of the truth that the hand of God guided the pens of those men who wrote of Christ? Thus the sublime form of the Son of Man is still present upon the earth; there it stands, drawn in living lines upon the page of revelation! There it stands, as a test by which, to the end of time, the human heart shall be brought to light. But He is also present with us in another way. Did he not say that he would come again and take up his abode with us? Are not believers his temple, his body his members? Is he not evermore present in every one who is born of the Holy Ghost? We are doubtless but weak members of his body, as with humility, we confess; but certain it is, if we are Christ's at all, then the Spirit of Christ must be our guide, and something of Christ must be manifest in us. Hence, I say further, as regards believers also, Christ is a test of the human heart. He who truly loves Christ cannot hate any man who believes on him; he who has no love towards those who believe on Christ, can have no love for Christ. "If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my word, they will keep yours also." By these words, Jesus bound indissolubly together his own destiny in the world and that of his people.

Weaknesses, infirmities, faults and failings, ought not to separate us from one another, for we all have to acknowledge them in ourselves. Should any man hate his own flesh and blood? and every Christian is my own flesh and blood; nay, he is more, for he is one spirit with me. But we go further. All the religious life and religious striving that we see in humanity finds its consummation and perfection only in Christ. Christ is the end of all religion; Christ is the goal whither the religious spirit tends and strives; Christ is the home where alone the human soul finds the end of all its longings after God. He has himself pointed out that the heart that would find and appropriate him, must have some affinity with himself. "*He that is of God,*" he says, "*heareth my voice.*" And, therefore the man, whoever he may be, who followeth hard after God, though in his search for him it be by circuitous and doubtful ways he journeys, shall be the object of my love. And the measure of my love for a man shall be the degree of sincerity with which he seeketh unto God, or the degree of self-surrender with which he has found him in Christ. To this consideration shall every other be subordinate.

And how do matters stand with us in this respect? How is it with our love to Christ, and to all those who are the members of his body? How is it with our love to those who make only religion the central point of all their labours, and even that in a most imperfect way? Can it be said of each one of us, that we have been brought into so living and personal a relation with the glorified Son of God, that we can truly say,

“Christ is the supreme object of my love; I love him as he demands to be loved; I love him more than father and mother?” Are those who are most closely united to him, even when they are deficient in human gifts and acquirements, are they nevertheless the dearest objects of your love—those with whom *you* can in all things feel most closely united? We ask nothing about your confession of faith;—as a confession of your faith we are content to take your love. For whoever can give an affirmative answer to the question, Lovest thou Christ more than father and mother, wife or child?—O! I scarce require to hear such an one lay down a confession of his faith, for sure I am he is a Christian, seeing he holds Christ more dear than any human being. But what a revelation of the hearts of the children of God in these days is given by the fact, that there are those among us who value more highly the assent to some little article of their peculiar confession, than the indubitable manifestations of a loving heart towards the Lord Jesus! There are thousands ready to cry out when one *goes too far*, as they call it; who yet have not a word of lamentation for those who do not go *far enough!* What a test of the human heart is Christ here also! Yet the present is a time which, above all others, requires that those that love Christ should unite more closely together. If the words, “He that is not for you is against you,” have ever been applicable to the people of God, surely they are applicable now—now, when the Protestant army is beginning to break up into two hostile camps—when the question

is no longer one concerning the truth of certain articles of faith—but where the matter at issue is, whether the State is to retain a church at all, Christendom a Redeemer, and mankind a God. Now is Christ the banner around which believers must rally and unite; and all those who can kneel in faith before his cross must stretch out to each other the hand of love; for now is Christ once more *that sign which shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

When Simeon spoke these words he had, however, more especially before his eye the closing period of the conflict of the Redeemer with the world; he thought of the period of his sufferings; and now we would show that it is true with more special reference to the time of our Saviour's sufferings that *He was a test of the human heart, which tried and brought to light what is in man.* Never have the deeds of men disclosed what is in the human heart in such a way as was done by their dealings towards him who could say, that in him men could see what God is—towards the incarnate Son of the Father. The human heart was then revealed by the conduct both of his *enemies* and of his *friends*. It was revealed by the conduct of his enemies. And surely the very fact that the Lord could have enemies is itself a striking apocalypse of the heart of man. And then, what enemies were his! Let us look at them for a moment. Brethren, this world has witnessed many a scene well fitted, one would imagine, to undeceive any believer in the radical goodness and excellence of the human race. Let

me recall to you one of those scenes. Scarcely fifty years are gone since in Europe, amid a cultivated, a Christian people, there was heard a cry, the very recollection of which makes the blood even now run cold in our veins. The cry was this: "Things will never go well with humanity, until the last king is hung with the intestines of the last priest!" Whose blood is not chilled by such a devilish cry? And yet even their guilt was not so terrible as was that of the murderers of Christ. When men suffer undeservedly, even though they may be the best of men, we cannot altogether forget that they are sinners; the measure of their own guilt may be very small—it may be nothing greater than a want of wisdom—still there is always some amount of guilt attaching even to those who fall as innocent victims. Add to this the retributive justice which is so often seen in their death: how often does the weight of that curse which had gathered over the heads of the guilty ancestors fall upon the comparatively innocent descendant, and crush him to the dust. Thus, however we may shudder at the atrocities of revolutionized France, still we cannot forget that it is the heavy sins of whole generations of kings and of priests that are there expiated in a sea of blood. And then, were the descendants really, entirely free from those sins of their ancestors for which they suffered? Now, it is this which constitutes the grand distinction between the place of torture where Jesus died, and all the scaffolds upon which innocent men have shed their blood. He it is, and he alone, of whom it can without falsehood be affirmed,

“ He had no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth ; he it is, and he alone, who could say that whoever saw him, saw the invisible Father. And it is he whom men have taken, and with wicked hands have crucified and slain ! Here indeed is the human heart first truly revealed—revealed even in the deepest depths of its depravity. If humanity could commit such a crime, what is there it could not do ? And it is the very same human nature that was disclosed in Caiaphas, in Judas, in Pilate, that dwells in my breast !

But further. The human heart is revealed also in the circle of the *friends* of Jesus. What a picture of weakness and infirmity, after the purest and most zealous resolutions, is presented to us in Peter ? The man who had borne this testimony of Jesus, “ Thou art the Son of the living God ; thou hast the words of eternal life ; to whom can we go but unto Thee ; ” can in the hour of danger say of him, “ I know him not ! ” And the nature which this test reveals in Peter, is not the nature of Peter only. No ; that human nature which dwelt in the breast of the fallen disciple dwells in my breast too ! Nor is Peter the only type of human weakness that we find beneath the cross. See you not yonder, at some distance, the other disciples crouching timidly together ? Not one among them all has a brave word to speak for the man of their heart who hangs upon the cross. Peter in the decisive and testing hour denied him—the others forsook him and fled. But I am not confined to such melancholy and disheartening examples, in

speaking of the disclosures of human nature which the sufferings of Christ called forth. The suffering Christ was indeed the test which brought to light how far the human heart is capable of obduracy, shallowness, and fickleness; but there was also manifested by the sufferings and death of Christ to what an extent the human heart is susceptible of the influences of the grace of God. There it was seen that, in spite of all the weakness of the disciples, faith had still a firm foundation in their soul. What might follow the tragic close of their Master's life they had no idea; when they bore him to the tomb they carried their hope to the grave along with him; but not—blessed be God—not their faith! See how wonderfully this is exemplified in the case of Nicodemus. This man, who only by night had ventured to come to the living Christ, buries the dead Christ by day! He confesses him before the whole world, at the very time when all his hope in him appeared to be crushed! But the hope which they buried with Jesus revived again when the grave opened its mouth and their Lord came forth victorious; when the cross, like a star shorn of its beams, streamed upon by the bright eastern sun, again shed forth its rays afar, to comfort and restore the nations! The spark of faith in the breasts of those disciples, which the load of the cross had well nigh suppressed, broke out towards heaven as a flame of joy, which nothing could extinguish any more. May we not say that, if it is true that a great revelation of humanity is opened up before us upon the cross, another scarcely less great is unfolded

beneath it? Here, side by side, with the greatest human phenomenon, there is made in it and by it a marvellous revelation of the nature of man.

We have at present been able to point out this truth only in some of its most general features. We propose to place ourselves beneath the cross, and the Revelations of the human heart which we shall witness there, will form the subject of our next meditations.

If, however, we have already said enough to show that the appearance of Christ is a test of the heart of man, O! then, let a new spirit of love to him, and at the same time to those who believe on him, awake within us; for according to the measure of our love to him shall we be judged!

O Saviour! Thou requirest to be loved more than father and mother, and thou hadst not required this if it were not that thy glory, thy grace and truth are really worthy of such a love! Reveal then thyself to us, O adorable Saviour!—reveal thyself in thy matchless glory and beauty, in order that we may become strong to love thee with that exalted devotedness which thou requirest. With love to thy members also do thou fill us anew. Yea, whoever in these times confesses thy name—whoever in love and in sincere self-surrender submits himself to thee—shall be holy in our eyes because thou art the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. Amen.

## SERMON II.

THE HISTORY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION MAKES MANIFEST IN CAIAPHAS TO WHAT A DEGREE THE HUMAN HEART MAY HARDEN ITSELF AGAINST THE TRUTH.

MATTHEW xiii. 14, 15.—In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross.

THE appearance of Christ is the test which tries and brings to light what is in the human heart. This is a truth, as we saw in our last service, which holds good of the present, as well as of every time. We have seen, moreover, that this truth is illustrated in a very special way in that portion of our Saviour's life, with especial reference to which it was spoken by Simeon—I mean in the history of his passion. “The thoughts of many hearts shall be revealed;” such were the words of Simeon. And truly beneath the cross the thoughts of many hearts were revealed then; and even there are they now revealed; for from the way in which a man acts at the cross of Jesus, is best known what manner of man he is. If, generally, Christ is the test by which men are proved, his cross is so in a very special sense, and it is so in more than one respect. Let us therefore take our stand this day by the cross of our Lord. True it is the Advent which we celebrate to-day; but one Christian festival does not shut out the rest. When those sad thoughts were suggested to Simeon's mind, it was the *Child*

Jesus that lay before him, and to the *Child* Jesus it was that he addressed the words, "Thou shalt be a sign that shall be spoken against, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed." And we may fitly prepare ourselves to keep the day of the birth of this noble Guest of our earth, by meditating upon the way in which "his own" received him, when he came among them. We shall stand by and witness how the human heart unveils and reveals itself beneath the cross of Jesus. O! it is a scene without a parallel that is here presented to us! As often as we contemplate anew those events, we are compelled to acknowledge that it really is a scene without any parallel in the history of the world! Look here, and behold him—him who said: He that has seen me has seen the invisible God—as he hangs between two malefactors! Behold him wearing the civic crown, with which men requite his services! And this the reward of all his pains! Beneath the cross the multitude rage like the surging of an angry sea, cries of passionate fury mingle with hellish laughter. And what men are those gliding to and fro among the crowd, so anxious and busy about something, and talking to the people so earnestly? Those are his high priests!—yes, His *high priests*, thirsting for blood; and they are persuading the people to cry—Crucify him! crucify him! They are Caiaphas and Annas. We are going to consider, in the first instance, how the heart of the *enemies* of Jesus is revealed beneath the cross. Let Caiaphas then come before us, and in him let us see an exemplification of the truth that, *beneath the cross*

*of Jesus is revealed to what an extent the human heart may harden itself against the truth.* If any of you have never seen a hardened human heart, behold one here. Let us choose for our text the words of Christ in which he characterizes this hardness. These were spoken, indeed, with reference to the whole of the people, but we know that all the accusations which could be raised against the people were ten times more deserved by its leaders. The hardness of the heart of man was, alas, no new thing in the time of Jesus: it need not, then, surprise us, if the Lord should make use of an ancient prophetic word, applying it to the people of his time. We read in Matthew xiii. 14, 15: "*In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive, for this people's heart is waxed gross*"—[“is hardened” —German Translation.]

We shall, in the first place, endeavour clearly to understand what is meant by the word *hardness*; we shall then see how this hardness displays itself in Caiaphas; and, finally, we shall lay to heart what we may learn from such a contemplation.

The very sound of the word *gross*, which occurs in our text, has something revolting in it; it sounds so hard, so impervious; and, indeed, it often is made use of in the Scriptures as of equal import with the word hardness. Do you know what a heart which has waxed gross is? It is a heart where the life of God stagnates and stops.

Now the life of God may stagnate in a heart in dif-

ferent ways. It may stagnate because the finger of God has been but feebly put forth to open the channels of that heart. Or, it may remain in a state of stagnation, even when the finger of God is mightily put forth upon it. Once more, it may begin to flow under the breath of God, and after that collapse again and grow harder than before. Of this last kind is the hardness of the heart of Judas, which will form the subject of our next discourse. Of the second kind is the hardness of the heart of Caiaphas, which we shall consider to-day. We have then to speak this day of that heart which has waxed so gross that it cannot be aroused any more, even when the breath of God breathes forth upon it; so insensible, that it will not bestir itself any more, even when the finger of God touches it mightily.

I have already said enough to make it clear to you that wherever there is this insensibility, this hardening of heart in a man, it is a sign that the grace of God is there, or has been there. A heart that does not move, that is not aroused, when God himself touches it—O, what a dreadful thought! Before we proceed with our meditation, it would be well for us to bear in mind, that when we call such a heart, a heart that is “waxed gross,” we do not speak merely with reference to people who are not present in this church. Possibly some one may imagine, that in this case the preacher, as so often happens, is preaching to those who are not in the church, and that he exposes their wickedness—why? In order, forsooth, that we may complacently soothe and cajole ourselves, and say, I thank thee,

God, that I am not such an one as those men! Away with such a thought! Much rather is it true that the preacher addresses himself to those who are in the church, even when he appears to preach only to those that are without. This is the case when we speak of hardness of heart. Will you deny that, in some degree at least, the charge of having shut and sealed your heart against God may be laid at your door? Is there then among you all, so much as one who, when God would have touched his heart, has never once refused to be impressed? O, Christians! I at least would not venture to answer yes in your name. The words against hardness of heart concern us all; and this will be more clearly seen in the sequel. The truth that it is only on the assumption that a man has been the subject of the working of divine grace, that he can harden his heart, is also expressed by our Lord in the passage before us. He says of the people, that "with seeing eyes they see not, and with hearing ears they hear not." See, he here assumes that God has manifested to them his grace. God has done wondrous things before their eyes; they see them, and yet they see them not: God speaks to them in a voice of invitation and of reproof; they hear him, and yet they hear him not. Does this form of expression surprise you? You would expect to find simply—"They see not," and "they hear not;" and it runs, With seeing eyes they see not, with hearing ears they hear not. By this way of putting, it is meant, that the object to be seen and heard is brought within the cognizance of eye and ear, and yet one does not see and hear them,

either because he cannot, or because he will not. In the case of the people to whom Christ applies this prophetic word, the former of these is true: they do not see and hear, because they *cannot*. For of what was he speaking. He was speaking of the mysteries of the kingdom of God, of which he had, under the veil of parables, discoursed to them, and they had not the capacity to understand their meaning. But, you will say, if one *cannot* understand a thing, why should he on that account be called gross and hard-hearted? Now you may be very sure, that the Lord means to say that in their inability to see and hear they were not innocent. That they have not been concerned enough about spiritual things, that they have not felt a sufficient interest in the great mysteries of the hidden life: this is what he would censure. For truly, it is ever blameworthy in a man when he cannot understand spiritual things. And hence it is, that even those who belong to the first class of which we spoke, those in whom the life of God has become stagnant, because the finger of God has been but faintly put forth upon them, must likewise be numbered among those whose hearts have waxed insensible and gross. What is meant by "not seeing with seeing eyes," is best brought out in the second and third classes we spoke of, in the case of which the objects come within the range of the spiritual ear and spiritual eye, and yet the man will neither hear nor see them. The sin of hardening one's heart is, properly speaking, a sin of *wilfulness*, not a sin of *weakness*. But on this very account, I can conceive some of you imagining that

when I speak of the hardened, I am preaching to those who are outside the church. For I have no doubt there are many here who believe that their hands are clean of wilful sins. O, would it were so! Would we were all free from "presumptuous sins," as David calls them, then it were well for us! Do not misunderstand me, my friends. I will not pronounce against you and myself an exaggerated, unjust accusation. I do not think there is so much as one here present who would deliberately insult his conscience; there are none here who, when conscience looks upon them with the flaming eye of a judge, would dare in madness to wield against her an impious blow. But this were an extreme case indeed; and if we would exculpate ourselves of wilful sins, we must not compare ourselves with the very worst instances of such sins. What I ask is this: When it is a question of going out of conscience's way, of throwing a cloak over its judging eye, of quickly going to work and committing the intended sin, before conscience can step in between us and the object of our unlawful desire, and let its protesting voice be heard—is there, I ask, so much as one here present who will venture to say, "That I never did"? What! you never sought to escape the voice and eye of conscience, you never silenced her warning voice, you never threw a veil across her dreadful eye? Ah! it were well with us if none of us had to charge himself with the commission of known and wilful sins! And then think how many gradations there are between sins knowingly committed and sins of ignorance. Between the extremes of warm and cold there

is lukewarmness; between knowledge and ignorance there is partial knowledge, O that the Lord may help us to attain that moral earnestness which presents a strong and unyielding front to evil, even when put partially known! Then at least would we be in safety from falling under the judgment of hardness of heart.

“Alas for him who scorns the voice of love,  
And lends his ear to sin!  
The gracious call of Heaven no more shall move  
His heart—alas for him!  
  
The still small voice Divine he dares to spurn  
In thunder once will sound;  
And love contemned will once in judgment burn  
His callous soul around!”

You see from this view of the power a man has to harden his own heart, in what cases people really are their own judges. Deny the reality of a day of future judgment as you may, blot out the book of God’s remembrance which bears the record of your guilt, and overturn the judgment-seat—all will not avail, so long as within the breast of every hardened sinner he himself keeps a dark register of his guilt—so long as a judge sits upon the throne of his heart who pronounces him “guilty;”—so long as retributive justice follows close upon his guilt. For every time offered grace is rejected, its second passage to the heart is thereby rendered far more difficult. Does not the man who, yesterday and to-day, has denied his conscience what she *asked*, become at length so fearfully emboldened that he refuses to render her obedience,

even when she *commands* and *threatens*? Hence you may understand how it is that hardness comes not unfrequently to be represented in the Bible as an act of God, as a judgment of God. "Whom he will he hardeneth," we read. "He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their hearts." Many honest persons have been scandalized at such expressions as these. Others have sought to blunt their sharp edge by applying to it the file of a superficial exposition, and have regarded them as merely Oriental forms of expression, destitute of all substance and import. But O they have an import, an import of deepest significance. For if we know that the judgment of hardness of heart is not a thing that comes by chance, but has its principle in a divine law, in a moral law of the world, then it may truly be called a divine judgment, and we may discern in it the acting and government of that Divine Justice which rules the world. Still more clearly may we see the truth of all this from the sacred narrative. Christ has appeared as the test whereby men are proved, and as such he has revealed of what an amount of hardness of heart human nature is capable. This has been exhibited in the case of Caiaphas. Let us see how God bears testimony of himself to him, and how he hardens himself against God. When a heart becomes hard, the grace of God must have been at work in that heart, the finger of God must have been put forth to touch it. God had touched the heart of Caiaphas. For Caiaphas was an Israelite, more than this, he was high-priest; Caiaphas had seen the miracles of Christ, he had seen the Son

of God upon the cross. Thus, and in so many ways, was the hand of God stretched out towards Caiaphas.

He was an Israelite, and thus one of the nation to which a Saviour had been promised. How diligently he must have searched in the writings of the prophets! How enraptured must he then have been, when, after a lapse of four hundred years, a new prophet arose in John the Baptist, and he heard him say of the promised of Israel, "*He standeth among you!*" O! what a feeling must it have been for every true Israelite when it was said of Him for whom, from the beginning of time, men had longed and waited, "*He standeth among you.*" And when the last of the prophets held up his finger, and pointing to a certain Man amid the crowd, said, "*Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world,*" what emotions must then have filled the breast of Caiaphas! True, it was no easy thing for him to recognize in Christ the Messias of whom the prophets had spoken. The prophets speak of him in most places, though not in all, as an earthly king, and dwell upon a kingdom of the Messiah in glory; and then again speak of his appearing as a teacher or as a suffering servant, without in general making any interval elapse between these two appearances. This makes their prophecy more obscure; and the darker the prophecy, so much the harder it is to believe. Caiaphas, this may excuse thee, but does it exculpate thee altogether? No, it cannot altogether clear thee. And why? Let me put the case thus: What would Caiaphas answer, if he stood before us now and were asked, whether it was easier for the

learned or for the unlearned of those days to recognize in Jesus the Messias of prophecy? Caiaphas, whatever answer thou dost make can but prove that thou wast guilty. Dost thou answer that it was easier for the unlearned? Well, the first chapter of John shows how they ran one to another exclaiming, "We have found the Messias." Or was it easier for the learned? Well, surely Nicodemus was one of them—he is called "a master in Israel;" and if Nicodemus could recognize beneath that humble garb the King of Heaven, why couldst not thou? Therefore on the last day will Nicodemus be thy judge. Thus as an Israelite the hand of God was stretched out towards Caiaphas.

But more than this, Caiaphas was the high-priest. Israel is a priestly nation; the priesthood of Israel is her flower and crown, and the head of that priesthood is the high-priest. Surely then the sparks of longing for the coming Messiah, scattered among the whole people, must have concentrated in *his* breast, and burned there in an ardent flame! What hopes, what desires must have been called forth as he daily handled the sacred symbols of the temple! O Caiaphas, when day after day thou didst see the priests approach the altars with their sacrifices; when, once every year, anew thou didst enter the Holy of Holies, with the sacrifice of propitiation for the whole people; is it possible that thou never didst feel within thee a strong longing for a Redeemer who should cause that endless series of offerings to cease—who should make atonement for the sins of his people to all eternity? Perhaps he never felt such longings. Well! in the case

of some, Christ comes to meet half-way longings which already exist in the breast; in the case of others, he calls them forth for the first time by his appearance itself, and then these longings are satisfied as soon as they arise—but such cases are rare and exceptional.

And now the Son of God was made manifest, full of grace and truth! A voice exclaimed in Galilee, “To whom shall we go but unto Thee? Thou hast the words of eternal life.” In Jerusalem another voice was heard—it was that of the aged Nicodemus—“Master, thou art a teacher come from God.” As he entered into the city, the little children cried, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” But neither the voices of the aged, nor the cries of the children, could reach the heart of Caiaphas. *“They have ears and hear not.”* A man is brought before the High Council in Jerusalem, where Caiaphas as high-priest presides. This man is known in the whole neighbourhood as one blind from his youth. He has recovered his sight by a miracle performed by Jesus, and now he is brought before the Council in order to be examined. But it turns out here, as in the case of many another examination of evidence, that the mind of the examiners is made up before they have even begun their questioning; the evidence is therefore of no avail. The blind man gives his testimony to the fact in question, so do his parents; but the answer is: “We know that God spake by Moses, but as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is.” *“They have eyes and see not.”*

The final catastrophe is drawing nigh. Lazarus

has risen from the dead; the people in Jerusalem are in a state of great agitation; once more the High Council has met. "This man doth many miracles," is the testimony given by those enemies of Christ. They can now explain away his miracles no longer. There they are, in stern, incontestable reality, and they come with power upon their conscience. Some vacillation is perceptible among the members of that council, and indeed two of them, as we know—Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea—are decided friends of Jesus. Once more the conscience of Caiaphas lifts up its voice within him. *But to no purpose. They have ears and hear not.* So far from listening to the internal monitor, he appears rather to fear lest the aroused consciences of the others should carry his away too. "Ye know nothing at all," he says, "nor consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not" (or, "rather than that disturbances should arise.") O counsel of Hell! Judas would be regarded as a friend of the poor, when he was all the while stealing from the bag; and Caiaphas would be looked upon as the father of his country when he condemns to death the Saviour. This is the cunning of the Devil, if a man but once begin to look about for reasons when conscience speaks to him, instead of at once obeying its voice; reasons indeed why he should disobey it!

One final probation awaits him. He has hardened himself in the sight of the living Jesus—will his heart not soften when he sees that Jesus in death? He has

hardened himself against the living Jesus, even in that last momentous interview, when He was brought before him to be judged. The high-priest had, as judge, addressed to Him the solemn question: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God;" and He whom he judged stood there, and, with all the majesty of an offended king, replied: "Thou hast said. From this time forward shall ye see the Son of God sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." But Caiaphas saw and heard Jesus then, as he had heard and seen him before, unsoftened, unmoved. Well, he has stood that sight, but will he hold out against the look of that royal head, when, crowned with thorns and streaming with blood, it is turned upon him? Judas could not stand that sight—even *he* could not bring himself to that. Pilate himself was overpowered by the wonderful majesty of his appearance; and the Evangelist records that, when Jesus came forth wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, he exclaimed, "Behold the man!" The people, too, are overwhelmed by the sight, and when Pilate gives them the choice between Jesus and Barabbas, a certain vacillation is observed among them (Mark xv. 11.) But Caiaphas was firm. O! he was a strong man, this Caiaphas! He well knew the art—the subtlest that there is out of hell—of mingling a sleeping-draught for his conscience. But it was not only his own conscience that he put to sleep, but also that of the people: do we not read that the chief priests moved the people that he should

rather release Barabbas unto them? Was I not then right, when I said that beneath the cross is truly manifested to what a degree the human heart may harden itself against the truth?

If you ever wished to see an instance how what is esteemed of men may be an abomination in the eyes of God, and again, how that may be highly esteemed by God which is abhorred of men, look at the cross, and you will see one there. What a strange contrast is there presented. Beneath, the high-priest stands, exclaiming: "He saved others, himself he cannot save. Let Christ the King of Israel descend now from the cross that we may see and believe;" and upon the cross there hangs a guilty criminal, who yet recognizes in him who is crucified beside him the opener of the gates of Paradise, and cries: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

But I have not yet completed my picture. After the history of the Passion follows that of the Resurrection, and the Acts of the Apostles succeed the Evangelistic narrative. Let us then see if in the subsequent history we shall not find something more of Caiaphas. It must indeed have been a great relief for the rulers of the people, when at length Jesus was laid in the quiet grave. They must have felt as one does when some difficult and dangerous enterprise has been conducted to a successful issue. About the grave, too, everything was still. They were not, indeed, exempted from all further concern in the matter: and from one quarter their victory might be endangered. They remembered, as we read, that

"this deceiver had said: After three days I will rise again." But an infallible means is at hand of providing against such a catastrophe; the grave is secured by a guard: and now they are perfectly at ease. Who can, therefore, imagine the magnitude of their horror, when on the morning of the third day the watchmen appeared, and with their own mouth addressed to the high-priests the first Easter sermon? If in all the events which had preceded this one, the conscience of Caiaphas had been unmoved, surely now at least he must have felt some emotion. "What!"—we may suppose the internal voice to have whispered the suggestion—"what! can it be that that Jesus is not after all—O, resist not—stay, desist!" "Be still, thou coward conscience, how thou dost disturb me! Shall I fear *thee*? Be still!"—And thus once more was the Divine monitor within put to silence. The watch, we read, received money, and were told to give out that the disciples had came by night and stolen away the body.

Even this was not the last occasion on which the hand of God was stretched out towards Caiaphas. If we turn to the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, we shall find another meeting of the Council assembled some ten weeks later at Jerusalem, and again this same high-priest presides. Before them stands one well-known as a lame man to all those who went to the temple, whom the two apostles have cured of his lameness. Peter stands before the court, and thus he speaks: "Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ

of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him, doth this man stand before you, whole!" And Caiaphas must hear all this! And if he was able to deny to his conscience the earthquake and the broken seals, and the grave-stone rolled away, there is one thing at least which he cannot deny; he cannot gainsay the fact that, if the Crucified is not risen indeed, he is certainly risen and lives again in the *spirit* of these his disciples, those men who, so shortly before, stood trembling and silent by the cross, and who now in the name of this same Jesus call to the lame man to "arise and walk!" No, this he cannot deny. So what does he do? He condemns the disciples "not to speak at all, nor preach in the name of Jesus." Is not this, in deed and in truth, "having eyes and seeing not?" Where then, I ask, has it ever been discovered to such an extent as in this narrative, that the heart of man can harden itself against self-evident truth?

And wherefore have we opened up this history together? Is it in order that we may go away full of self-satisfaction, saying: "I thank thee, God, that I am not such a man as Caiaphas?" That were a poor lesson indeed! The first thing which we have to think of in contemplating this narrative is this: Caiaphas was a man, and the humanity that dwelt in his breast was the same that dwells in mine. One of the ancients has said: "I am a man; and nothing human is alien to me." A profound saying, and one capable of being applied in many ways. Thus, I am a man, and in every man I see my own flesh and blood, and that

which I would that they should do unto me, I shall do to them. But the saying may be taken in another sense: I am a man, and, therefore, nothing that at any time men have done, is alien to my humanity. First, then, what I would seek to impress upon your heart and upon my own, is, that we should bear in mind what is the only right way in which we may *speak of the sins of other men*. And that is, without ever forgetting that their sins dwell also in our own nature. Let no man undertake to sit in judgment, or to pronounce upon the sins of the ungodly, without at the same time judging the sins of his own breast. We dare not condemn even the hard-heartedness of a Caiaphas, unless we also condemn the daily-exhibited tendency of our own hearts to harden themselves against the truth. Further, my brethren, the example of Caiaphas shows us in a very peculiar way that it is possible for God to seek to gain a heart by a thousand signs and attestations of grace, and yet all in vain. Is not this an important lesson for these times of ours, when so many think, that unless signs and wonders again take place, men will not be held accountable for their unbelief? Should not the case of Caiaphas teach us that the unbelief of our times does nowise arise from God doing too little? Think you that men would believe *now*, any more than they did in his days, even if the signs and wonders which he witnessed were repeated before our eyes? Let the heavens once more open, let the Son of God once more come down, full of grace and truth; let the cross of Calvary rise anew, let a second Easter morn dawn

upon the world!—But all this occurred eighteen centuries ago, all this Caiaphas saw, and yet he believed not: and think you that human nature is different now from what it was then? O, it is the very nature of that spiritual insensibility of which we speak that, with eyes to see, it is, notwithstanding, blind. Let us then acknowledge what a fearful state this spiritual insensibility is, and if we acknowledge how fearful a state it is, we will surely not leave this sacred house without renewing our determination to regard the voice of conscience as something holy, and to flee even from that which we do but partially know to be evil. For this insensibility does not come all at once: a man begins by shutting his eyes to truth only half-recognized, and he ends by openly insulting truth which he fully knows.

Beloved in the Lord, it is the time of Advent. This meditation is also well suited for Advent. If we wish Christ to come to us we must fulfil the conditions under which alone he can come. Now, his own words teach us that among those conditions, one of the very first is, sincerity and faithfulness towards the inward voice, and a tender conscience. “If any man,” he says, “will do the will of him that sent me, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.” When Christ says, “Whosoever learneth of the Father, cometh to me,” and again, “No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him,” he means by this nothing else but the voice of conscience, for by it the Heavenly Father teaches us that this is the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins

of the world. May the tenderness of conscience which makes us sinners in our own eyes, make us also men such as know no more blessed joy than the joys of Christmas when to us a Saviour is born! O Father, teach thou us, draw thou us, help thou us. Amen.

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### SERMON III.

THE HISTORY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION MAKES MANIFEST IN JUDAS TO WHAT A DEGREE THE HUMAN HEART MAY HARDEN ITSELF AGAINST THE TRUTH, AFTER HAVING KNOWN THE WAY OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.

**2 PETER ii. 20, 21.**—For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

WE have placed ourselves by the cross of Christ, in order that we might there see how the appearance of Christ in the world makes manifest what is in the heart of man. Caiaphas was the first to meet us there. In him we saw an instance of the extent to which the human heart can harden itself against the truth of God. Those of you who followed our meditation must have been deeply struck with the disclosures of the heart which that history makes. You have turned your eye inward upon yourselves too, and have said with

alarm: It was a human heart which thus hardened itself, and I participate in a like human nature, the seed of that very sin dwells in me! And these are, in truth, the feelings which such a contemplation should call forth. I already mentioned, that in the history of the Passion a second instance of hardness of heart comes before us, and to this we shall to-day direct our attention. That second instance is presented to us in Judas Iscariot. Hardness of heart is, then, where the life of God stagnates in the heart. This may be in one of two ways. The finger of God may be put forth to touch the heart of man, and yet that heart may remain unmoved: that was the case with Caiphas. Again, the finger of God is put forth upon the heart of a man; that heart moves beneath its touch, begins to beat; but alas, it is only to collapse more hopelessly, and become more fatally hardened and insensible than before: this was the case with Judas.

You will find the passage of Scripture which we shall make the basis of this meditation, in 2 Peter ii. 20, 21: "*For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.*"

I might have chosen a saying of our Lord as the text of this discourse, one to which these apostolic words do also appear to refer. You remember the

words of our Lord: "When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places seeking rest, and finding none. Then he saith, I will return unto my house; and when he is come he findeth it swept and garnished; then he goeth and taketh to himself seven other spirits; and the last state of that man is worse than the first." The thought is the same, only the Apostle expresses it without a figure, and therefore more intelligibly. I might also refer you for expressions of the same truth to the sayings of daily life. Do we not say, "No stronger hate than after strong love," and many similar sayings. Thus does common experience harmonize with the experience of the kingdom of God. "It had been better not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after having known it, to turn from the holy commandment."

Let us first inquire *why this is so*, and then show, from the example of Judas, *that it is so*. We shall be sensible this day to what an extent a heart which has already tasted of the truth, which has already walked in the way of righteousness, is capable of becoming hardened; and in the contemplation every man must lay it seriously to heart, because we are human, and the human heart is radically the same in all. There is not one of us who has not cause with David to confess before God: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me."

Why is it so? Why is it better never to have known the way of righteousness, than, after having known it, to turn from it? First on this account, *because it is a baser outrage against a man's con-*

*science to fall away from truth which has once been known, than to refuse to know it; and further, because the baser this outrage against conscience, the heavier will be the judgments of God which shall overtake it.* What we have seen in the case of Caiaphas was surely a most base outrage against conscience. When God comes so very near a man, when he daily does signs and wonders before his face, and yet with eyes to see he does not see him, with ears to hear he does not hear his voice, surely this is to offer a grievous insult to the grace of God, surely this is most basely to outrage one's conscience. Nevertheless, a carnal-minded man like that regards the truth as a hostile, unwarranted power, which begins to wage war with him, and against which he must defend himself. Of such a profane man, one may say that he is in a state of warfare against the truth, but one can scarcely call him a rebel against her authority. Now, whether is the greater transgressor against the king of a country—the open enemy without the frontiers, or the rebellious subject within the gates? And such is the difference between those who have not yet known the truth, and those who, after having known it, have turned their back upon it: such is the difference between a Caiaphas and a Judas. Caiaphas was a foe: Judas was a rebel. Doubtless it is dreadful to think that a man made by God should acknowledge in that God no sovereign rights over him. But there may be something even worse. To have at one time owned those rights; to have had times when one could say, “Thou, and thou only, art my King and my

God;” to have had seasons in which one had upon his knees before God sworn to him the oath of homage: and after all this to have turned one’s back upon him, and forsaken the way of righteousness, O! this is the most dreadful thing that can happen upon earth. When in the parable the Lord speaks as judge to his servant, and says, “Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant,” we think how deep a sense of shame must have overwhelmed that servant. And thus in the judgment of God shall all those wicked servants be dealt with who, after having known the way of righteousness, turn their back upon it.

You will be in a position to see more clearly how it must be so, when you have considered the consequences which follow such a course. I said that *the baser the outrage done to the conscience, so much the more grievous will be the judgments of God which overtake it.* And, first, I call upon you not to deceive yourselves by imagining that there can be any other alternative with regard to the sins of men but this: either they are pardoned in time, or they will be punished in eternity. Pardon in time, or punishment in eternity; and the measure of the punishment of unpardoned sins will be according to the degree of their guilt. God is righteous, and his righteousness is manifest here. There is, I am persuaded, no one here present who has dealt with himself with but moral earnestness, who cannot give his own experimental testimony to what a blighting, withering influence a deviation from principles which one holds sacred exercises upon the whole inner man. A breath of fire seems to go forth from

the evil word or deed, which makes all the leaves and blossoms of the soul parched and withered. As soon as the word spoken in violation of better knowledge has crossed the lips, as soon as the unrighteous deed has been committed, a feeling of numbness comes over all the soul: all one's strength is lost, all one's spirit is gone, and the man stands there as if he was struck from head to foot with a sort of spiritual paralysis. It is as if one were precipitated from the top of a mountain into the valley below; and at first one sees no possibility of ever being able to regain the summit from which he fell. This is the case even when but one deviation from the way of truth is perpetrated. And if such is one's experience, when but once a man has proved traitor to his conscience, has but once swerved from the right path, think what it must be in the case of him who altogether turned his back upon the well-known ways of righteousness. That there are apostates in this church is more than I am warranted to believe. But there may be some among you who were once in earnest about Christianity; and there are certainly those who, at one time, sought to act towards themselves with conscientious strictness, but who have again lost hold of themselves, and who now, as before, "wander round, caught by earth's shadows as they fleet," or float in giddy thoughtlessness upon the glittering waves of worldly pleasures. My friends, the pangs you feel are far from being those of the men who have utterly fallen away, and yet how grievously does your conscience oppress you! How does all confidence in yourselves fail you now, how does all con-

fidence fail you in your God! What a thorn you bear in your heart, which pains you, perhaps not keenly, but continually, like a gnawing worm! Have you not, in the internal agony of the conflict between your better knowledge and an evil action, sometimes felt as if you could have wished in your despair rather never to have known the way of righteousness? Ay, and it has sometimes happened—and this belongs to the most fearful passages in the history of the human heart—it has happened, that in order to escape the sting of being *half* in bondage to sin, men have surrendered themselves *wholly* to its power. Because their double service of God and the devil left them no rest, they gave themselves up wholly to the devil. O, would they had rather given themselves wholly to God! But alas, they could do this no longer, and why? Because they could not *believe* any more. I wish to speak more particularly of *this* judgment of hardening of the heart, because it is the one which comes more prominently before us in the case of Judas. The man who turns his back upon the known ways of righteousness, loses, according to the degree in which he does so, the power to believe, and therewith the power to return to those ways. He who never has been born again, thinks that to believe on a God of grace is a very easy matter indeed: he does not know what sin is, and hence he cannot understand what grace is. But after a man has come to know what is meant by sin, and what is implied in grace, how hard does it become for him, after some act of great unfaithfulness, to find again strength to believe! Thus, when it does

occur that Christians, who have been once enlightened, and have once tasted “the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,” that even they fall away into carnal sin, or any other heinous transgression, at no time in such a case is the danger of total apostasy far distant. And why? Because they thus lose the power to believe.

What a fearful instance of this does the fall of David present. If we examine carefully the different intimations of Scripture in that history, we shall come to the conclusion that his condition after his fall must have resembled one of profound stupor. He was as a man who has fallen from some high elevation, and who knows not what has happened to him, far less how he shall ever regain the height from which he fell. David then appears to collect himself; he begins to understand his position. But, alas! the way to his God is now shut against him—that way he once knew so well. Conscience, as an insurmountable barrier, opposes itself to him, arising like an inexorable partition-wall between him and his God. He dare not now draw near to him; and one long, weary year has passed ere the words of Nathan at length bring light across this deep night of darkness. Hear how he describes the sorrow which consumed his soul: “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer.” O awake, ye careless Christians! awake to a consciousness of the reality of the judgment of God! He who does not persevere in the

way of righteousness so long as he can, can at last no longer when he would ! And thus do the consequences of apostasy show why it is better never to have known the way of righteousness, than when it has once been known, to turn one's back upon it.

Let us now illustrate the truth of our text by the example of Judas. Here we have to show—*first*, that it can be said also of Judas, that he had at one time walked in the way of righteousness; *secondly*, how he turned his back upon that way of righteousness; and *thirdly*, what judgments followed his apostasy.

*Judas had once walked in the way of righteousness.* There are, indeed, many who doubt whether it can truly be said of Judas, that he ever walked in that way. There are many who think that no spark of faith or piety ever burned in his breast; that in joining himself to Christ he was, from the very first, influenced by no other motive than the wish to acquire honour and riches, through a Messiah who he expected was to come forth as a mighty conqueror. But if this was the case, why then did Christ choose him as one of the twelve? True it is, Christ said on one occasion concerning him: “Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of *you* is a devil.” But if the Lord chose him especially from among the multitude of his followers, it must have been because he saw something in him to justify such a choice. Then again, when Christ spoke those words, a year had already elapsed since the time of his election; and in a year much may happen—especially in nearness to Jesus. For we must bear in mind that this nearness to Jesus

must have worked very effectively upon the spirits of his disciples. He was like a moral sun, which matures the growth of good plants, but at the same time scorches those which have no root. And in this sense also it is true, that by him "are the thoughts of many hearts revealed." But what most distinctly shows that Judas must have gone at least a certain length upon the way of righteousness, is the account we read of the effect produced upon him by his oyn dark deed of treachery. So great was his remorse at the remembrance of his crime, that he could rather commit self-murder than endure the thought of having delivered him up to death. If you do but endeavour to realize his circumstances, you will, I think, conclude that Christ must have made on his mind a strong, ay, an overpowering impression. When, casting down the thirty pieces of silver in the temple, he exclaimed, "I have betrayed the *innocent* blood;" he must have meant by that word innocent, a great deal more than one usually means when one speaks of an innocent man. Because it is certain that a man like him would never have laid violent hands upon himself from remorse at having betrayed a merely innocent man. Where, indeed, should we find a similar case to this in history; although it records instances enough of men who have betrayed innocent blood? It is therefore evident that Judas once knew the path of righteousness, and had even walked some little way therein. We admit that he may not have been influenced by bad and selfish motives, when he first sought the company of Jesus; yet with all that, he must have

been a block of timber out of which something could be made for the kingdom of God—his heart must have been a soil from which the plants of righteousness might have been reared. And, at least in the early period of his discipleship, there must have gone forth from Jesus even into *his* heart, some rays full of warmth and of light.

Further, let us inquire how it was that Judas *came to turn his back upon the way of righteousness?* A wise man of ancient Greece used the remarkable expression: That as there is no pomegranate in which at least one corrupt seed may not be found, so there is no man altogether without some bad spot in his nature. And it is scarcely less remarkable that that saying has been adopted by that great philosopher of modern times, who has expressed his conviction that every man, even the best, has his price, at which he will be ready to sell his virtue when his hour of trial comes. Yes, my brethren, each one of us has his corrupt spot, each of us has his bosom sin. And our bosom sin is the weak side of our nature. It is that part of us where temptation first assails us; it is the feeblest and worst defended point in the citadel, where Satan sets his scaling-ladders when he would take possession of a human heart. O, that every one would endeavour to find out his bosom sin, for if he knows it, he knows the price at which he is venal in the hour of trial! But the worst of it is, it is precisely our most corrupt spot that we generally know least about—and why? just because we are so sensitive about it. Few come to

know it through their friends; more readily may it be learned from one's enemies.

Now, covetousness was Judas's bosom sin. One feature of his early life has been preserved to us by John, and that is sufficient to let us understand all that follows. He had doubtless a natural talent which was closely allied to his darling sin, and that was a talent for money matters and keeping accounts, and therefore it was that the common purse was confided to his care. But he stole the money of the Lord and of the poor. He stole the money of the poor; and yet, when Mary took the box of precious ointment, and poured it upon the Saviour's feet, because she loved much, he affected a true philanthropy, and was indignant that so much money (for the value of the ointment was about forty-five dollars) should have been withheld from the poor. Do we not feel, when we contemplate this heart, as if we looked down into an open sepulchre, full of all uncleanness? Now the whole subsequent narrative becomes intelligible to one. Yes; a man such as that could betray the Saviour. It is said that when he betrayed the Lord he entertained the hope that Jesus would set himself free again. It may have been so: but we do not require to receive this assumption in order to make his committing such a crime conceivable. The man who thus surrenders himself to sin, falls wholly into its power: over him it acquires irresistible control, so that at length he no longer knows what he does. Men may be so under the power of lust that it drives them—whither, they know not; whither, reason and conscience do not ask.

And this is the case with *every* passion when it is allowed to grow to a great degree: let any passion rule unbridled within you, and it will bring you to such a state that you no longer know what you are doing. How many better thoughts had Judas to crush within him, before it came to this with him.

Our eye rests in general only on that last point of the fatal way that Judas went, when the Lord said to him: "What thou doest, do quickly," after which, as John tells us, "he went out, and it was night." We think that this was the moment in which the devil contended for his soul. But the heat of the conflict was *not* in this moment. It was rather in the hour, when, for the first time, he put forth his hand towards the purse, the purse of the Lord and of the poor: this was the moment when the devil made his chief assault upon his heart.

Without are foes on every hand,  
And traitors lurk within!  
Who can Satan's wiles withstand  
That is in league with sin?

From that fatal hour in which he first put forth his hand to commit the first act of theft, the flame of conscience burns every day more faintly, and sin becomes every day more easy. Brethren, if the flame of conscience is to burn, it must be fed, and prayer is the oil that feeds it. But Judas had ceased to pray; for Judas was a hypocrite, and a hypocrite *cannot* pray. We may deceive our fellow-men, but God cannot be deceived, and this every one who draws near to him

in prayer must feel. And thus, onwards from those first days of his intercourse with the Saviour, the motions of his heart towards God grew feebler, until they cease altogether; until, at length, no finger of warning and of threatening is held up before his soul any more, at least if there is, he sees it not—if it cries, Desist! he hears it not. And so on until he becomes a traitor. And the name with which he passes into the world's history is—the Traitor! See you not here to what an extent that man may become hardened, who has once known the way of righteousness? At the cross of Christ it is revealed. O! let him that standeth take heed lest he fall!

It remains now that I speak of *the judgments which follow the sin of thus doing outrage to one's conscience.* We have mentioned them in part already. We have already seen that the conscience which to-day is unheard, and scornfully repulsed, will speak to-morrow with a less audible voice; and that daily the path of sin becomes smoother and more easy. This is the judgment of hardness which is most immediate and unfailing. Sin punishes itself with sin—momentous and world ancient truth, which the poets and wise men among the heathen proclaimed. And what is most fatal in that truth is the view, that with every step further into sin, return becomes more difficult, and this very especially in the case of those who have once known the way of righteousness and have turned their back upon it. For thus they lose the power to believe and to love, and when that is gone, how shall they return again into the region of peace and of life?

Observe to what an extent Judas lost the capacity to love. What human heart can be untouched by the contemplation of the serene and solemn demeanour of Jesus towards him when the first season was past, and sin had begun to do its work. On the one hand, there is that divine earnestness with which, from time to time, he uttered the voice of prophetic warning in his ear. And on the other hand, that considerate love with which, in these warnings, he ever spared him before the disciples, never mentioning his name, just as if he was addressing a secret word to his heart alone, by which he constantly and unweariedly wooed his heart—ever up to that majestic close, when he washed the traitor's feet! And by all that, Judas was untouched; to all he was insensible. For he that has himself ceased to love, can no longer understand the love of others. In his dead heart all is voiceless and mute. Even when he took the pieces of silver, his heart was unmoved; the price of Him that was valued did not burn in his hand. But he awoke at last. One often sees the motions of conscience, which for years have been repressed, at length, in the moment of decision, when the fatal die is cast, break out within the deadened soul, like a storm gathering from all parts of the heavens. And thus it happens here. At the very moment when the nameless deed of infamy was going on; when Pilate was saying, "Take ye him and crucify him;" and when he, in whom even Pilate could find no guilt, was led away between two thieves to execution: then it is that the pent-up storm burst out in fury within the conscience of the traitor.

And as he heard a voice cry out against him from every fold of that conscience—"Traitor, traitor!" the feeling that awoke within him was—"Yes, I loved him *once*; *once* I was loved by him!" But from such thoughts as these he could derive consolation no longer: they were but the beginning of the pains of eternal judgment; for alas! he had then no longer power to believe. He had no pity for himself, how then could he hope that Christ would have pity on him? True, even then it was not too late! O, it was not too late! Judas, why didst thou not, even then, hasten to the spot where thy Master was breathing out his life? Surely he who opened the gates of Paradise to the crucified thief would have had compassion upon thee! And if he could not stretch out towards thee his nail-pierced hands—if his mouth, already closed in the last death-struggle, could no longer speak the word, "Father, forgive!"—yet surely his closing eye would have proclaimed thy pardon, yes, even *thine!* But alas! in vain had it spoken thy forgiveness: for what does pardon avail where there is not faith to receive it, to make it our own? And this is the most frightful of all the judgments which follow upon hardness of heart, that when God is willing to forgive, the man can no longer believe in forgiveness. O, overwhelming truth! Wherefore do we look forward to the end of time and doubtfully inquire, if a throne of judgment be erected there? Look here! Behold a judgment-seat in every sinner's breast, and around it all the terrors of a righteous God!

Now we know that it is better to have a cold heart than one which has grown lukewarm, for the cold heart can be more easily warmed. Now we know why it is better not to have known the way of righteousness, than after having known it, to turn one's back upon it; for the way thither is infinitely less difficult than the way back. And why have I proclaimed this truth? In order that we may be ashamed and confounded at Judas? I tell you, No! but that we may be ashamed and confounded at our own selves; and that every one that standeth may take heed lest he fall!

O Thou eternal Mercy, who condemnest none but those who condemn themselves, help us, we pray, that we may not condemn ourselves! O Thou eternal Justice, who on the earth didst so mightily reveal thy terrors in the breast of the hardened sinner, help us, we pray, that we fall not under thine eternal judgments. Amen!

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## SERMON IV.

THE HISTORY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION MAKES MANIFEST IN PILATE TO WHAT A DEGREE THE HUMAN HEART IS CAPABLE OF SHALLOWNESS AND VANITY.

JOHN xviii. 38.—“Pilate saith unto Him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews.”

WE have been contemplating the revelation of the human heart presented to us in the history of our Saviour's passion. We have seen what is implied in the sin of hardening the heart, both in those who will

know nothing of Christ at all, and of those who, after having once known the way of righteousness, have turned their back upon it. To-day a different character will come under our view—another of the dark sides of human nature will unfold itself before us. The two characters which have hitherto formed the subject of our contemplation, have been such as we felt ourselves separated from by a wide chasm; and notwithstanding, we felt called upon to take their case seriously to heart, and like the disciples in the Gospel, concernedly inquire, “Lord, is it *I*? ” It may be that to-day one and another of us will be forced to exclaim, “God help me, for that case is just my own!” I am going to speak to-day of that class of men who are too bad for heaven, and too good for hell. According to our intention, as you will recollect, we have spoken first of the enemies of Jesus; to-day we shall cast our glance upon one who was too weak to be an enemy of Jesus, but who was also too weak to be his friend: to-day we shall contemplate Pilate. We shall see this day *to what a degree the human heart is capable of shallowness and vanity*, and this will be shown us in the case of Pilate. Listen to that saying of the Gospel, which in a few words completely describes the man, in John xviii. 38, “*Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews.*”

In order to learn from the example of Pilate to what extent the human heart is capable of shallowness and vanity, let us look into the heart of Pilate and there see how vain a man becomes, who is too weak to believe in truth, and at the same time too weak to deny it

altogether. We shall then consider his actions, in order to see how, in the case of him to whom truth has become an empty sound, justice and virtue also become an idle name.

*Pilate was too weak to believe in truth in divine things.* The time had arrived among the Roman nation, which sooner or later must come upon every people whose religion is not of the truth. All such religions fall a prey to the weakness of old age. When reason awakes and begins to put forth her power, the infantile or savage views of religion are no longer able to hold their ground, the upper classes throw aside their belief, the lower classes become uncertain, while the priests laugh to each other over the blind dupes of their subtlety and craft. “O! what dreary times these must be!” I think I hear you say. But are you aware that there are people who tell us that the present is such a time for our Christian faith; and that, according to them, its last hour has already struck! Now to maintain that the last hour of Christianity has arrived, in times when the battle-cry of her warriors resounds through every land, when numberless journals are engaged in keeping the record of the campaigns, the joys and sorrows of the Church; ay, and when the messengers of the Gospel are sent forth in troops to take possession of the countries of heathendom in the name of the Head of that Church; to maintain in days such as these, that Christianity exists no more, and Christ is dead, were folly indeed. And yet even were it so, were Christ in his Church now dead—O, surely he would rise again! He has already celebrated more

than one resurrection in the course of history; and just when people imagined they had buried him, behold, he has risen in light, and given the world a new Easter-morning to keep! Yes, in the little vessel of the Church, Jesus may sleep, but he cannot *die*—he abideth ever.

But of the religions of the two most refined nations of antiquity, it is sure that at the time of the birth of Christ, they had outlived themselves, and were already paralyzed with age. And in this do we not recognize how the finger of the clock of time pointed to the hour when the old was passed away, and the period for the new and perfect religion was at hand? When the stars in the spiritual firmament begin to fade, it is a sign that morning is about to dawn, and that the Sun of the world is about to rise. Now, at such a period of decay in the religion of a people, we generally find the minds of those who have forsaken the faith of their fathers dividing into two classes. The one class are those who, as they look with a sorrowful eye upon the downfall of their national faith, do nevertheless feel confident that although *their* religion be not the true one, still there must undoubtedly be a *Religion of Truth* for man. And so, amid the conflicts of their storm-tossed heart, they strive, and search, and labour, with such awful earnestness, that if Truth were buried deep beneath the earth they would dig her thence. Of such men there were not a few in those days among the Roman people. History tells us that they were beginning then to go over to the Jewish sanctuaries in crowds—strong enough to set

at defiance the scorn which their haughty fellow-countrymen were wont, even then, to pour upon the circumcised people of Israel. Mention is made in the New Testament of some of those noble, truth-seeking souls, as Cornelius and the centurion of Capernaum: and strong believing spirits those must have been. Was it not of the centurion of Capernaum that Jesus said, “Verily I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel;” and do we not read of Cornelius, that his prayers were carried by the angels before the throne of mercy? Young men, who think you can offer no resistance to unbelief in the faith of your fathers—if such there be among you—consider, I beseech you, *how* those men of old broke with their religion: namely, so that their *heart* was at the same time broken too; consider further, that in ceasing to believe they did not cease to inquire after truth; that when they could no longer pray to the God of their fathers, they at least stretched out their hands to the Unknown God!

But there was another class, and that undoubtedly the most numerous, of those who had lost that sacred thing, which should be linked with every fibre of the human heart, the faith of their fathers, and who, notwithstanding, lived on in the world careless and unconcerned, as men who had parted with a worthless and somewhat troublesome possession. This is the class in which we must reckon Pilate. I do not deny that when one hears him cry, “What is truth?” one’s first impression of him is somewhat higher than this. But perhaps we feel thus only because his words recall to

our mind the hours when we made use of the same words to express the earnest longing of our soul. Our cry, "What is truth?" was the utterance of the deepest, the most awful questionings of our heart. I think I hear those words sounding out into the silence of night from many an oppressed, tempest-tossed, and weary soul. Ah! these are not empty words scattered on the winds: no, they are burning prayers—and in the vast night to which alone they seem to be breathed, there are angels waiting to bear them, as they bore the prayer of Cornelius, up to the throne of mercy. And thus, when we hear Pilate ask, "What is truth?" we are inclined to think well of him, to think of him as an inquirer after truth. But was it, indeed, in this sense he put the question?—was it, in fact, a question at all with him? If so, why did he turn away the very instant after putting it? Why did he turn his back upon the very King of Truth who stood before him, ready to answer it? Truly, if it had been a real question of a needy heart, we should have to form a very different judgment of his character. But it was not a question, it was an expression of his own view in the matter, or at best such an interrogation as he had already answered for himself, and answered in the negative. Yes, Pilate made in these words a confession of his faith upon the subject of truth, and a dreary faith it is!—that all the religions which have ever existed upon earth have been systems of falsehood—that every praying heart has believed a lie—that the fire of devotion in the suppliant eye has been but an *ignis fatuus*, only lead-

ing astray; ay, and that the Man who stood before him, when he said, I am a King—the King of Truth—uttered a lie!

O Pilate, if thou hadst ever before turned thy back upon any one who would testify to thee of the land of Truth, it might be forgiven thee. These knew only by hearsay of that land, they had never sojourned there—at most they had only been a little way over its border. But when the king of that region stood before thee, why didst thou, in the very moment when he would testify to thee of the truth—O say, why didst thou then turn thy back upon him?

That Pilate was too weak to believe in truth is clearly enough implied in the words of our text. It may, however, somewhat surprise you when I add, that *he was also too weak to deny truth altogether*. But I ask, is it possible for a man to rid himself entirely of all belief in the truth? It is hardly possible: for faith is the breath of life. And even if a man entirely forsakes the truth, the truth does not utterly abandon him, but still casts, ever and anon, a faint glimmer of light across his soul. And Pilate had not courage to deny it altogether; this we learn from the sacred narrative. Let me recall to you that momentous interval which elapsed after Pilate, himself convinced of the groundlessness of the charge of the Jews against Jesus, had offered them a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. Pilate sat there on his throne. No sound was heard save the whisper and murmur of priests, as they hurried to and fro, busy in instilling murderous thoughts into the minds of the

multitude, too easily seduced. Then it was in the early morning, that a message came to Pilate from his wife, which told of a dream she had had, in which it was announced that the man that stood before that judgment-seat was a righteous man, and one whose fate the Deity held more dear than that of thousands. After receiving that warning, the man who did not believe in the truth was nevertheless more zealous in his attempts to release Jesus. And now he hears from the Jews that he had said that he was "the Son of God:" then we read, "he was the more afraid." For certain memories are beginning to rise up in Pilate's heart, olden memories of his childhood, and the idea awakes within him, with strange foreboding, that this man may be one of the sons of the gods, of whom ancient tradition tells, that they were wont sometimes to descend and wander upon earth, taking up their abode within the breast of some favoured mortals. What! can those old stories be true after all? Can it be that here is one of those sons of the gods? He calls Jesus aside and asks, "Whence art thou?" It cannot be his earthly home he here inquires about; he had already learned where that was; but he expects to receive some extraordinary, some mysterious reply. But Jesus is silent. Pilate, wherefore didst thou turn thy back upon the King of Truth when he would testify to thee of the land of truth? Behold here thy punishment! Now when thou askest, the mouth of truth is dumb before thee! O let no one, especially let none of you young men, turn your back upon divine truth, when she would speak to you; otherwise,

believe me, she will be voiceless in that hour when, upon your bended knees, you will earnestly entreat one little word from her mouth. For Truth is a queen, and no one can treat her with contempt and not suffer for it some day.

“ Speakest thou not unto me?” cries the astounded judge; “ knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?” Cease thy impotent threatenings, thou vain man! for before thee stands One far greater than thou, and he points thee to the Judge before whom thou too shalt one day lay down thine account. With the majesty of a king summoning a rebellious subject before the bar of judgment, Jesus answers, “ Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” “ From thenceforth,” we read, “ Pilate sought to release him.” See you not here a proof that truth does not altogether abandon a man, even when he has begun to forsake it? And this man, who is too weak altogether to deny the truth, and at the same time too weak to believe in it and to love it —what a mirror his character holds up to so many of us! Do you not recognize in him a picture of yourselves? There are not many, even in our days, who would venture to meet Christianity with a decided and deliberate negative. But how few respond to it with a deep heartfelt affirmative, and endorse their belief in it by a life of new obedience in conformity with its requirements. Most people are content half to affirm it and half deny, half to receive and half

reject; they reply to the invitations of the gospel with a "Yes" and a "No"—and "I dare say it is all true," or a "Well, I suppose I believe it all." But, my friends, is that a faith to which a man would sacrifice his life—would deny the world and conquer the flesh? O no! Our belief in the truth must be deliberate, certain, decided, in order that it may become a believing life! If it is not so, if our faith be an empty name, then will our actions be also vain; for if truth once become to us an idle dream, we shall soon cease to have any faith in justice and in virtue.

Let us now direct our attention to the *actions* of Pilate. O, you need but tell me whether a man's faith is strong or weak, and I will tell you whether his works are strong or weak. He for whom belief in eternal truth is only a vain sound, knows of no momentous import attaching to what he does, and therefore sees only vanity in his actions. For him righteousness and truth have become an empty name. When solemn and eternal motives have ceased to regulate a man's conduct, those of merely temporal and accidental bearing will take their place; when the fear of God is not the ruling principle of life, the fear of man will become so; and then are all his actions vanity indeed. O doubt it not, that which gives reality and worth to the works of a man, is his faith. This I say also to those of you who think that the worth of a man consists not in his faith, but in his principles; you too practically acknowledge that a man's worth is really in proportion to his faith. For what are your principles? Are they merely the max-

ims of worldly prudence? Such principles, I confess, have nothing to do with faith. But if they are something higher than this—principles in the true sense of the word, concerning which you are convinced that they are eternally and unalterably true—then they are based upon nothing else but faith. Look what your principles rest on, is it not on faith? for do you not *believe* in their eternal validity, do you not believe that they hold good beyond and above all the maxims of a mere worldly prudence? Take any one of those principles—take, for instance, the popular saying, “Right is right, or “Honesty is the best policy.” Now you cannot see with your eyes, or touch with your hands, that final result which will prove that your honesty in this or that particular action will turn out in the long run to have been the best policy; no, you act honestly, *believing* that the ultimate issue will prove that your action was as politic as it was upright; that issue you can see only with the eye of faith. Now, whoever has such principles—principles which are higher far than any mere worldly maxims, of which he knows that they are grounded and based in an eternal order of things, that man has faith. He may be blind enough to disown the source from which it comes, he may keep repeating that it is principle that makes him a man, and not faith, still in his principle there is faith. Hence I say once more, that which gives a man worth and character is his faith; and he for whom faith in the truth is nothing but a sound, can see no deep import in his conduct; hence his actions will be vain. Do you wish to see an

instance of this? Then look here at the man who could ask, "What is truth?" with a tearless eye and an unagitated heart: look, and observe how in his case justice and virtue in action were also for him an idle sound, when the hour of trial came!

O Pilate, what a fate is now given into thy hand to decide! He at whose feet mankind one day shall bow, to receive from him the award of their eternal fate—he is now in thy power, before thy judgment-seat, and thou holdest the scales of justice over him! Pilate, thy hand may at other times have been uncertain when it held those scales, but in *that* moment there could have been no uncertainty in thy judgment, if truth had not long since become an empty name for thee!

It remains for me to show you, how the man who had turned his back upon the truth, turned away also from conscience and from justice when the greatest of all human decisions was given into his hand. You shall witness a scene, perhaps not altogether unfamiliar to you, for it has probably been exhibited in your own heart; you shall see a poor, hard-pressed human being, struggling between his conscience on the one side, which with might assails him, and summons him to execute justice; and the fear of man on the other side, along with anxiety for his honour, his office, and his property. You shall see the man who has turned traitor to truth, in the first instance endeavour to set himself free by cowardly conduct, and at last end by betraying his own conscience and the cause of righteousness.

From the very first, Pilate had a strong conviction of the innocence of the man whom the Jews had brought before him that he might pronounce upon him a sentence of condemnation; "he knew," as Matthew informs us, "that for envy they had delivered him." First, he had recourse to that expedient to which men resort, who have no decided heart for truth and justice: it is, perhaps, the most innocent way, but at the same time it is cowardly enough. He sought to roll off from his own conscience the burden which was too heavy for it, upon the conscience of others. So he sent Jesus, as a Galilean, to Herod Antipas, the king of Galilee, who, he learned, was then in Jerusalem. It was in vain, Pilate, the battle is destined for *thee*—thou must fight it out! So they lead Jesus, arrayed in the purple robe, back from Herod, and bring him a second time before the bar of Pilate. Another resource presents itself. The blood-thirsty mob must have death, but their law also requires, that at the feast one be set free. The Procurator accordingly proposes to them a choice between Jesus and Barabbas. In that momentous interval, when the people are making their choice, the dream of his wife is told him, and throws a new light into his conscience:—what a struggle may then have been carrying on in his heart. But this new device is also unavailing. The people cry, "Crucify him, crucify him!" And now see how doubly he deals with his conscience. He will at once still its threatening voice and satisfy the blood-thirstiness of the mob. He commands the bloody scourge to descend upon the

back of the innocent One, of the King of Truth, and then he leads him forth again, and asks the people whether they are satisfied now? "Behold what a Man!" But they see not what a Man. "Crucify him, crucify him," they cry, "for he has made himself the Son of God." Once more Pilate examines Jesus. His majestic silence, when asked, "Whence art thou?" and the royal answer which follows, throw a weight into the dubious scale which seems almost decisively to weigh it down. But alas! "If thou let this man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend" falls on his ear, and again the scale rises. He washes his hands —had he but washed his heart!—and pronounces the verdict, "Guilty!"—See here what becomes of all human virtue, of all human justice, in the hour of trial, where there is no faith. Thus vain are the actions of the man who has no faith. Hold as fine discourses as you please about justice and nobility and love, but the blessings which are seen will still be stronger than the unseen, and temporal advantages supply the place of virtue. No; it is only he who has faith in unseen blessings, in an eternal inheritance, which more than indemnifies for the loss of that which is seen, which remains when it has passed away; he it is alone who can show true nobility, love, and justice.

Brethren, to you I address myself, and I ask, are there not some in this assembly who would burn with anger if one were to question their morality, but who, were their piety and faith to be denied, would hear the charge unmoved, just as if it were nothing more than

if some one had denied them a talent for music or any other accomplishment? But know you not, that in admitting that your morality is without faith, you admit that it is a plant without a root, which any whirlwind of temptation may destroy, or ever you are aware. You may see from the case of Pilate, how vain a man's actions are when they are unaccompanied by faith. And let me add one further circumstance connected with him, which is not indeed recorded in the Bible, but which we learn from history. Do you wish to know how the man who had declared truth to be an empty sound, *died*? I will tell you. Visited, so history tells us, with great and heavy misfortunes, *he at last died by his own hand—like Judas!* Alas for the man who knows of no blessings beyond those which are seen! He believes that when these are taken from him, all is gone, and life has no longer any joys for him! And who can tell but that the memory of the hour, in which he had spoken the word “guilty” upon Jesus, the Son of God, remained upon his soul all his days, and, like a discordant note, jarred through all his life? For as thoughtless as he was, we see that some impression had been left upon him. And, doubtless, in these misfortunes which befell him, the solitary moments came, in which he would say to himself, “There is something in truth after all!” Perhaps he never altogether could succeed in removing from before his eye the image of the unjustly condemned King of Truth; perhaps it rose before his soul in that last dark hour! If it was so,

there was more than an external resemblance between his death and that of Judas.

O Christians! What shall the result of this study of the character of Pilate be with regard to us? Shall it be merely this, that we are struck with horror at the thought that he could turn his back upon the King of Truth? No, at ourselves also we must be ashamed, at ourselves we must be confounded, we who to this very day act as he acted, we who, like him, ask, "What is truth?" and like him also, do not wait, keenly and patiently, for an answer to the question. How many are there who, with a deeply agitated heart, make the inquiry, what is truth? How many are there who, when they have addressed this question to the Scriptures through which it is that the king of truth now speaks, give themselves time to listen, humbly and longingly, until they have heard the answer? Now and then a moment may be given to the thought, but then the heart is away again at something else; and a thousand other questions come before us which interest us much more.

O Christians! If hitherto we have turned our back upon others who would testify to us of truth, or have lent to their words an unwilling ear, it may be forgiven us also. For these knew only by hearsay of that land; they had never sojourned there, at best they had been only a little way over its border:—but if you turn your back upon the king of that land, *that sin remains!*

O Lord, give us a willing ear and an impresible heart when thou speakest to us, for we have believed

and known, that thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, and that thou alone hast the words of eternal life! Amen.

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## SERMON V.

THE HISTORY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S PASSION MAKES MANIFEST IN PETER TO WHAT AN EXTENT A HUMAN HEART MAY WAVER IN ITS ATTACHMENT TO HIM IN WHOM IT HAS CONFESSEDLY FOUND THE WORDS OF ETERNAL LIFE.

JOHN vi. 67—69: Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.

LUKE xxii. 60—62: And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter: and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

BRETHREN in Christ:—The enemies of Jesus have passed before us. After them the man who was too weak to be an enemy of Jesus, and at the same time too weak to be his friend, has been held up before our view. This day we turn our glance upon the *friends* of Jesus. You have witnessed in the case of Pilate, to what a degree the human heart is capable of shallowness and vanity, and have seen that he to whom truth has become nothing more than an idle sound, soon comes also to regard righteousness and virtue as

nothing but an empty name. To-day we shall see, to what a degree the hearts even of those who can confess, that Christ has the words of eternal life, may waver in their attachment to him. As we contemplated the man who asked, "What is truth?" and, immediately thereafter, turned away, our conscience reproached us, and we were compelled to acknowledge that we were like him, because there are so very few among us who inquire after truth with an earnestness which influences their whole life; so few, who, with all the intensity of which their nature is capable, search the Scriptures through which the King of Truth addresses us; so very few, who, after reverently asking the question, "What is truth?" reverently awaits its answer. Ye superficial Bible-readers, one and all! ye who but seldom read, and lightly inquire, ye who think but little and pray but rarely, can it be that ye have heard the solemn lesson which the history of Pilate teaches, and heard unmoved? O surely, to-day at least, the truth of God will come home to you, for it is to you more especially I have this day to preach, as I hold up before you the consequence of a superficial Christianity like yours. We shall learn from the case of Peter, *to what an extent the human heart may waver in its attachment to Jesus, even after having confessed that He has the words of eternal life.* Listen to the two passages of Scripture which show us this.

We read in John vi. 67—69: "*Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go?*

*Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.*" And further, Luke xxii. 60—62: "And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew. And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter: and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And Peter went out, and wept bitterly."

We learn from these verses how Peter *stood*, how he *fell*, and how he *raised himself* again. Let us view these in succession, and then we shall turn our eye from Peter, and look at *ourselves*. For there are doubtless some among us who, up to this time, have been ready enough to "cast a stone" at Peter, not stopping to ask themselves whether they were really altogether without sin in this matter. Let me then show that also in this respect we have, all of us, occasion to put the question, "Lord, is it I?" And more than this: it will probably appear the case of many of us is worse even than that of Peter was, inasmuch as we have fallen like Peter, but have not risen again as he did. Thus we shall have to leave this sacred house with the humbling conviction of how great a degree of wavering in its attachment to Jesus may be exhibited by a human heart, even after it has acknowledged that He has the words of eternal life. And each of us will say in the silence of his heart: Ah yes, good cause hath "he that standeth to take heed, lest he fall!"

*How Peter stood.* Peter stood in such a relation to Christ, that already, before he heard those words of his which immediately precede our text, he had spent many an hour with Jesus in which he had tasted of eternity; and therefore it was he could cry, "Thou hast the words of eternal life." We too experience somewhat of such feelings as we read the Scriptures; but the impression which the words of Jesus make on us is naturally much feebler than with those who heard him themselves. Hence we can with difficulty conceive what an amount of ardent feeling might be put into these words of Peter. Let me therefore dwell upon this a little longer. The words of eternal life which Jesus spoke, address us merely in the cold, stiff letter, and we must first analyze them and take them to pieces, ere we can become aware of the spirit and life they contain. But when they flowed from the living lips of the incarnate Redeemer, then verily there must have been a strange moving in the air; a breath of life must have breathed about those words, such as must have touched every impressible heart! We see even common minds affected by that breath thus immediately felt, in a mysterious way, such as reason in vain attempts to comprehend. We read, for instance, of a certain woman in the crowd, who, as she hears Jesus speak, cannot choose but cry with an unaccountable enthusiasm, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts which thou hast sucked!" What do I then mean when I say that those had greater privileges than we enjoy? I mean this: we have the mere words, and not even them, as uttered

by the voice, but only, as it were, encoffined in the black letters; while they had, besides the words, the impression of the whole personality of Him who spoke them. And what a Personality was that! Other wise men had taught, and their disciples had heard their words of wisdom. But what essentially distinguished Jesus from all these other teachers of truth is this, that he not only discoursed of truth, but that he was himself the Truth he spoke. When the wise men of this world preach to us, so little are we in the habit of taking for granted that their life is in unison with their doctrine, that we hardly think it worth our while to ask whether they are indeed the truth which they proclaim. One of those wise men has even used the remarkable expression, that a man might get rid of his knowledge of the words of many of these teachers of wisdom, by becoming acquainted with their persons and their lives.

Now, it was the perfect harmony which subsisted between the words and the character of Jesus, that caused that unbounded confidence, and deep attachment of souls to him, to which he refers so strikingly in the parable of the Good Shepherd, where he says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." Every word was a revelation of his person, and therefore it was that every word had so profound a significance, and sank so deep into the hearts of those that heard him. And Peter was one of those who knew the voice of Jesus in its deep, soul-penetrating power; and therefore he united a cordial reliance upon the words, with an entire confidence in

the person, of Jesus. And thus it was he would exclaim, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He knew that he was the Son of God, because he said he was; and could the words of him in whose discourse he had so often tasted of eternity, be words of falsehood? In the case of this disciple, his self-surrender to the Lord himself was ever closely united with his reliance on his word. "Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will not I be offended," cried Peter with an ardour worthy of his love. Who can tell how great was the influence which the character, and works and words together, exercised imperceptibly upon the minds of the disciples! It must have been vastly greater than anything we are in the habit of imagining, greater even than they themselves were aware. Do we not see a proof of the overpowering effect of this personal intercourse with Jesus, in the case even of that disciple, whom we designate the unbelieving Thomas? When, in prospect of the last journey to Jerusalem, the disciples were endeavouring to dissuade the Saviour from undertaking it, reminding him that he would thus expose his life to imminent peril, Thomas exclaimed to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him!" Yes, even that faint-hearted disciple would rather lose his life than Jesus? How strong, then, must the band have been which this Jesus entwined around the souls of men! And when Thomas had thrust his hand into his side, and when, cured of his unbelief, he fell upon his knee before him who is the resurrection and the life, he summed

up all his experience of the three years, and of these last hours, in that memorable confession—in which, indeed, is contained the substance of the Christian faith—“My Lord and my God!” Now, must not the antecedent impressions have been quite superhuman, in order so to affect a heart that it could find utterance only in words like these? Do but realize the immense gulf which in the eyes of the pious Israelite lay between God in heaven and men upon the earth, and you will feel that this exclamation of Thomas is itself an evidence, that in the appearance of Jesus Christ was beheld the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father. The saying of Thomas throws also some light upon the feelings with which Peter must have uttered the words of our text. From them we are better able to perceive what an amount of fervour and intensity of feeling that confession of his implies. This, then, was the relation in which Peter stood to the Lord.

*How Peter fell.* As they lead away his Master, all the others flee, but Peter follows, drawn by love. John, who is known in the high-priest’s house, enters with the rest, and the door is shut. Love still keeps Peter waiting without the door, he cannot turn away from the spot where he has seen the last traces of his Lord. Is it not a touching spectacle that this disciple presents, as he stands waiting there without, now that the company has gone in, and the door is closed upon him? See him standing there in his perplexity, full of melancholy thoughts and sad forebodings. It must have been this consideration that moved John to

open the door to him and admit him to the palace. And it could be no ordinary impulse of love that urged him to enter there. What danger did he not incur in such a place and at such a time! The people were together there, who, but a little before, had seen him in the garden; Malchus was there too, against whom he had drawn his sword: should they take vengeance upon him, what fate will he have to expect?—that of certain death. Their attention is now directed to the stranger in that unusual place, at that unusual hour. One question after another presses hard upon his alarmed spirit; and the man who, but the evening before, when Jesus said, “If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me,” had shuddered at the thought, now breaks out, with cursing, in the fatal words, “*I know not the man.*” Alas for the weakness of human nature! O Peter, if he had been so dear to thee, that for his sake thou hadst been willing to sacrifice thy honour and thy life; how couldst thou, then, in that hour have disowned him? how couldst thou have denied what was doubtless even then to thee the highest blessing and most treasured thought in life—how couldst thou have denied that thou didst know thy Saviour? At that moment, we read, the cock crew. The crowing of the cock calls the slumbering conscience to awake. Yet not the crowing of the cock, but the words of Jesus, that “before the cock crows, thou shalt deny me thrice,” resounded through his soul. Who has not made the terrible experience, that when once after a fall conscience awakes again, a thousand forgotten voices of God

wake up along with it, and cry out in accusation against the terror-stricken soul?

*How Peter raised himself again.* “And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter went out and wept bitterly.” At that very moment, as the crowing of the cock resounds, the condemned Jesus advances from the interior of the palace towards the outer porch. Not a word falls from the Lord, only a single look, but it is enough; and in a moment before the disciple’s soul flashes his sin in all its horror. Doubtless this quick understanding on the part of Peter, is a testimony to the deep-reaching character of the tie which bound his heart to that of the Saviour. Peter! say, what didst thou read in that look? was it the sentence of thy condemnation? O! it could not have been that alone, for Peter could still weep. Peter could weep—O! had Judas only had such tears to shed! He wept bitterly, we read in Mark, and he went out.

He sought retirement. In this how truly his heart guided him! It is only in solitude that a man can come to himself again after a fall like his. His tears flow, and his heart is wrung with penitence and shame, and yet he feels as if, notwithstanding all, he could still say, “Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!” and feeling this, he is in a position to give the right interpretation to the look of his Master. “Yes, I see its meaning now: ‘I know not the man’ was what I said of him. Ah! what would it have been if in return he had said the same to me! But no, that was not what that look of his expressed. There was

surely too much of tenderness mingled with its stern rebuke for that. Did it not appear to say, ‘Thou *dost* know me after all, and because thou knowest me, I forgive thee! ’ ’ And indeed, how could he ever have ventured into his Maker’s presence again, if he had not first procured forgiveness of his sin. But he had; for in that season of retirement the tears of penitence had cleansed his soul, and so he could venture to join again the company of his fellow disciples. Judas fled, but Peter we find beneath the cross, beside the grave of the risen One, and then by his side once more. True, a fall like this cannot pass away without leaving some trace behind in the memory of the true-hearted man. O, I doubt not that it was with deep humility and shame that Peter showed himself again among his brethren. We are warranted in assuming that he felt himself as good as deposed from his apostolic office—but at the same time surely not from the love of Jesus. We are warranted in believing this from the fact, that Jesus should have found it necessary solemnly to reinstate him in that office, and, in presence of all the others, to restore to him, as it were, a good conscience. Three times he had denied him, and three times must the question pierce his soul, “Simon, lovest thou me?” And three times the command is given, “Feed my sheep!” And thus can even an inconstant, faithless follower of Jesus, who comes to repentance, and, after his fall rises again, be restored to all the divine offices and rights which he had forfeited by his sin.

But is it not surprising to what a degree a human

heart may prove unfaithful, yes, even one which has already mightily experienced the power of Jesus' words!

Is there any one here who would cast a stone against the fallen disciple, and not against himself? Truly it may be thought marvellous enough that such should be the characters of the men who have come to occupy high places in the kingdom of God?—there we find a David, a crucified thief, a Peter, a Magdalene. But let none dare to blaspheme against the counsel of eternal mercy! I much fear, that if the door by which these entered heaven were shut, *we* should have to remain outside. I greatly fear that there are many of us who daily fall like Peter, without *rising* like him. Doubtless if truth had been a holier thing in his eyes, Peter would not have hesitated a single moment to risk his life for its sake. But I ask, how sacred is truth in *our* eyes? Jeremiah cried in his time, “My people shooteth lies with their tongue, it is altogether full of deceit;” would not the aged prophet have to repeat the cry, were he now to appear upon our streets, or in our courts of justice, or in our social assemblages. I do not now inquire concerning the sincerity with which men *act*, I speak at present merely of the sincerity of the truthfulness of their resolution, and I ask, how many Christians are there even in this assembly, whose firm and resolute determination it is, nowise and in no case whatever, to make a sacrifice of truth, and rather to risk the loss of fortune, honour, life itself, than utter an untruth? How many are there who, with resolute hearts and

firm persuasion, can make this saying their own: "Should the whole universe, with all its millions of creatures, hang by one thread of falsehood, and I knew the word of truth that could cut that thread, I would say it!" Rare, indeed, are such sincere and conscientious lovers of truth. On the other hand, those mean spirits are numbered by thousands and tens of thousands, who, although they might blush to confess it, still, were the truth known, have secretly come to an understanding with themselves, that falsehood is justifiable in every case where truth would bring harm; aye, even where it is thought that truth would be less advantageous, or less agreeable for people to hear. Do not our tradesmen make use of a lie to excuse themselves for a neglect of duty, without a blush, just as if it were a matter of course? Does not the man of the world avail himself of falsehood as one of the many clever and commendable ways of making himself agreeable? And would I had not to bring with bitter grief this very charge against you young men: and yet surely nothing less becomes your age than cowardice, and what is falsehood if it be not most pitiable cowardice? And yet has not falsehood become even among you in certain cases the rule! Ye who know how to appreciate the charge of cowardice, will ye not be ashamed of the cowardice that is implied in telling a falsehood? O triple curse of lying, that it should bring dissimulation even among those, the glory and jewel of whose age is to be found in their integrity and veracity! And let not him who has once begun to withhold from sovereign truth her

inalienable rights in some things, let him not imagine that he will be able to preserve those rights inviolate in others. The proverb says, ‘he who has once lied is never believed again;’ and another, that to one lie there belong seven more. If you have but in a few places broken down the fence that surrounds this sacred temple, you are safe no longer from any temptation. And *this* lying generation would look down with pity and scorn upon Peter! And you who weakly vacillate between truth and falsehood, as often as the truth would make you a few guineas poorer, or rob you of the favour of a vain mortal, *you* would cast a stone at Peter, the disciple who at least had courage to follow his Master at the imminent danger of his life!

Undoubtedly it is true that Peter did not sin merely against truth in general; he lied against that truth which was to him the most sacred of all, his relation to Christ; hence his guilt is not one-fold, but a hundred-fold. But will this consideration exculpate *us*? How many of us, then, are so certain of their strength as to be able confidently to say that under no possible circumstances they would prove treacherous to that which they regard as religious truth? In a time when there are so many Pilates, I much fear the number of martyrs would not be great. Were the days of bloody persecution for religion to return, were the Romish Church again to erect her scaffolds and light her stakes, were the days to come in which the fanaticism of infidelity like that which deluged France with blood, should leap upon our shore and brandish the

sword over the heads of the faithful, how many of us feel confident that in such times they would not deny their relation to Christ, but that, in the words of Christ, they would hate their life for his sake, in order to find it again in life eternal? What! *we* would do that—we who even now deny our relation to Christ that we may escape the jest of a scoffer, or the loss of some worldly advantage! *We* would be in a condition to give up our lives for his sake—we who, in order to save ourselves from the epithets with which they brand the followers of Christ—in order that people may not call us Methodists or Pietists, sacrifice so much of boldness in our confession, of practical carrying out of it in our daily walk and conversation, so as to make sure first of enjoying undisturbed repose, and an unmolested life? O surely the man who has not acquired sufficient strength to endure in obedience to His command even a little scorn and contumely, for his Saviour's sake, surely he who has not yet learned, in his own experience, what is meant by those words of Peter, “Blessed are ye when ye are reproached for the name of Christ, for the spirit of glory resteth upon you”—may well doubt whether he would in the hour of trial be ready to part with his life for the sake of his God. And it is we who would denounce the apostasy of Peter, and forget ourselves!

Brethren, if there is any charge of universal application, this charge of falsehood is such. There is not so much as one here present who is not guilty in this particular, not one who has not cause to smite upon his breast and say, “God be merciful to me a sinner!”

Yes, if we only *would* utter that cry! For all our cowardly falsehoods, all the denials of Christ of which we are guilty, shall be forgiven us, as they were forgiven to Peter, if only after every falsehood and every fall, we raise ourselves again like him. But do we really feel our sin in this matter? Do we take deeply to heart the untruthfulness of our life, our cowardliness, our denial of our faith both by speech and by silence? Does it bring the blush to our cheek and the tear to our eye to be caught in an untruth? And when the eye of conscience looks upon us, as the eye of Jesus looked upon the fallen disciple, do we start, does our heart misgive us, and fill our eyes with tears of penitence? Or do we turn aside our eye, in order that we may not meet its glance, and undisturbed go on our way? After every such unfaithfulness do we seek retirement, that we may settle our account with God as Peter did? Or, do we return to our companions with conscience unreconciled, and talk with them until we have succeeded in dispersing the cloud, and until the angry voice of conscience is silenced or forgotten? Alas, that we should be so ready to note and comment upon the fall of a David and a Peter, and make so little of their penitence? Doubtless there are many among us who daily fall like Peter, but who do not daily raise themselves like Peter. Therefore cast not a stone, say not a reproaching word against him, but rather against yourselves, against yourselves many of whom have cried with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life!" Yes, let us see in Peter to what a

degree the heart even of one who has known Christ may waver in its attachment to him.

Who shall dare to judge another  
When he falls to sin a prey,  
Or exulting view a brother  
Falter on life's rugged way?

Look in sorrow, not in anger—  
Let his fall our pity wake;  
Trembling let us feel *our* danger,  
Let us timely warning take.

O thou God of holiness, seeing that the weakness of our poor human heart is so great, deal thou with us not according to thy justice, but according to thy mercy! And since amid the constant faltering and falling of men, no sacrifice is more well-pleasing to thee than a broken heart and the tears of penitence, O, may thy Holy Spirit chasten us at every fall, at every denial of thy name—so that, if we fall like Peter, we may also rise like him. O Lord! thou knowest that we love thee: then do thou, when we forsake thee, restore us again to the privileges of thy children, and when we return, do thou receive us, Lord! Amen.

## SERMON VI.

THE HISTORY OF THE SAVIOUR'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION MAKES MANIFEST IN MARY, THE MOTHER OF OUR LORD, TO WHAT A HUMAN HEART MAY BECOME UNDER THE TRAINING AND DISCIPLINE OF GOD.

LUKE ii. 34, 35.—And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

BELOVED in the Lord! We have seen the truth of that saying of Simeon which we placed at the head of our present series of meditations, proved in repeated instances. We have indeed witnessed a “revelation of the thoughts of many hearts” beneath the cross of Christ—a revelation such as may well make our own heart tremble. But I then promised you, that it would not be dark abysses of the human heart alone, which would open before our view, and from the history of our Saviour’s passion we were also to learn *what a human heart may become under the training of God.*

The time of our Lord’s sufferings and resurrection was peculiarly a time of spiritual discipline. There are certain epochs in human life, in which a man is all at once unexpectedly led by the Spirit of God a great way further on in his journey, so that he is himself surprised at it, when he afterwards looks back upon the road. Such epochs in a life-time are, generally, periods of affliction. It is only those hearts

across which the ploughshare of God has passed in which the seed of life deeply falls and quickly grows. Now the week of our Saviour's passion was for the disciples, preëminently a time in which the plough of God went over them. And that period along with the Resurrection, was for them also a time in which they were, all at once, advanced further upon their way than they had been throughout the whole of their previous life. To this our Lord himself refers, when he compares the circumstances of the disciples at that time to those of a woman in travail, "who when her hour is come, has sorrow," but, he adds, "as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." The man to be born was the new man of the apostles and all the followers of the Lord, which was born out of that season of affliction. Doubtless many a precious seed had fallen into their soul during the period of their intercourse with the Saviour, but till then it had not sunk deep enough into the soil of the heart. Now, however, the ploughshare passed over them, the seed sank deep, and when on the day of Pentecost the rain of God came down to water it, lo! all at once the fair stalk of corn shot forth. This is true of all the followers of Christ who were at that time in Jerusalem. I have already spoken of Nicodemus in this connection: and what I said of him is true also of Peter, Thomas, John, Mary the mother of our Lord, and all the rest. Let me illustrate what holds good of them all by the example of two of them, of Mary the mother of our Lord, and Thomas. You

recollect that it was with special reference to Mary that the saying which we have placed at the head of this series of meditations was uttered—the saying of Simeon that spoke of the revelation of the hearts beneath the cross of Christ. Let us then take once more for our text the words of the aged prophet: “*And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*” Luke ii. 34, 35.

*The sword, which pierced the heart of the mother of the Lord, severed the earthly from the heavenly in her faith and in her love.*

And thus it is, that we see revealed beneath the cross, in the case of the mother of our Lord, what, under the training of God, a pious human heart may become. In order to recognize this more clearly, we must go back to the very beginning of her spiritual training. Then we shall see that the fatal sword, of which the old man spoke, had begun to pierce her soul already, long before the passion-week. We shall contemplate the mother of the Lord as *hoping*, as *waiting*, as *looking*, as *tried*, and as *purified*.

*The mother of the Lord as HOPING.* What she hoped for was, that the Word would become flesh, and that He whom the heaven of heavens could not contain would lie upon the bosom of an earthly mother. And as God never exalts any one who does not first humble himself, so it happened in this case also. The virgin

who was chosen, was one who, in her humility, could make no other answer to the heavenly message but this: "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden." But it is not the sublime aspect of this virgin humility, it is not the nobility and purity of her mind that we contemplate this day. We have rather to turn our attention to what constituted her *hopes*: "Thou shalt bring forth a son, to whom the Lord shall give the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever." Such was the Divine promise. "That can be none other but the Messias," she would say to herself, and along with the thought all the promises and hopes of the Israel of God would rise in a moment before the soul of that pious handmaiden of the Lord. Doubtless she was a member of that little company who waited for the consolation of Israel, to which Simeon, and Anna, and the shepherds of Bethlehem belonged. She well knew the promises of God to his people. And so her eye would now run along the chain of prophetic utterances, up to that first scene in Eden. And all the great names, which prophecy had applied to the Desired of nations, would come with a new rapture before her soul: the seed of the woman, who should bruise the head of the serpent; the seed of Abraham, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; the offspring of the tribe of Judah, unto which the Gentiles should seek; the Son of David, whose throne endureth as long as the sun endures. Who then can wonder if her high and holy exultation breaks forth in the words, "From henceforth all generations shall call

me blessed, for—He that is mighty hath done to me great things.” But prophecy had spoken of the future in a multiplicity of different figures, which embraced not only what Christ was in his humiliation, but also what Christ should be throughout the whole history of his Church, and what he shall be in his glory at the end of all things. For all this was comprehended in the vision of futurity which opened up before the prophets, and was expressed in figures, borrowed from that time. Accordingly the expectations of the Messias among the people were very diverse. Whatever peculiar wish and longing filled a heart was linked on to the appearance of Him, whom they had significantly called the consolation of Israel; but among those various hopes there were some of the meanest and some of the most exalted character.

And here I would make a remark. We hear many talk with contempt of the impure, carnal hopes which Israel indulged regarding the Messiah. But, I ask, are the hopes with which many Christians cast their eye into eternity so much more elevated? Surely your hope for heaven in eternity is to be found in your hope of a heaven in time. Is there not much of earthly dross, thoughts of mere earthly pleasures mingled with even your highest and best hopes of heaven; and will it not fare with the carnal expectations which many a Christian entertains concerning the kingdom of God, as at the appearance of Jesus it fared with the false dreams of many a Jew concerning a Messianic kingdom upon earth?

Say, blessed mother! in what colours didst thou  
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picture to thyself the kingdom of thy Son? Didst thou conjure up before thee a heavenly Jerusalem, with golden streets and pearly gates, through which the might of the Gentiles and their kings should be brought in; and hast thou figured to thyself the throne of thy Son and of thyself as more glorious than that of Bathsheba in the days of king Solomon? Beloved, I think that, from what is recorded of that noble woman, we may draw the inference, that she did not form to herself a picture of the future at all. No; that humble spirit felt too deeply that she could not trust herself to attempt to realize the glory of the Son, without incurring the danger of dwelling on the prospect of the reflection of that glory which would fall on the mother. No; Mary did not conjure up scenes of future pomp and glory: but Mary prayed. She did not feast her fancy with visions of coming splendour; no, she only gave thanks to God. She is the servant of the Lord, who, when the message of the angel is announced to her, buries all other thoughts, and questions, and imaginations in that one sublime utterance, "*Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.*" In her noble soul all other thoughts were united in this thought: He is *Jesus*, that is, the *Help of God*. For the Help of God, for that precious name of Jesus, she gave thanks. If we are right in assuming that this was her character—and the intimations of the sacred narrative would seem to warrant us in so doing—then surely the Virgin Mary is a heroine; for it is an easier task to conquer a

Goliath upon the battle-field than it is to curb the vagaries of an idle fancy.

*As waiting.* The star of Jacob has appeared. He, to whom the Gentiles shall seek, is born in the inn at Bethlehem. Before every new-born child one stands with reverence, I might almost say, and at the same time with an anxious presentiment. It is as though one were looking at the tiny, softly bubbling spring from which the little brook flows, and one cannot tell whether that brook may not become a mighty stream, which shall overflow the world. With what feelings, then, must those have stood around the child Jesus, who *knew* that that little rill of Shiloh was destined one day to inundate the whole world, and to bring all the waters of the earth into its mighty bed! With what feelings must the mother have stood there, who knew all this, and yet could say, *It is my child!* Parents, you should regard each of your children as a pledge of the grace of God. If we may say this of every morsel of bread we eat, of every ray of sunshine that falls on our path, O, how much more may we say it of the noble, the god-like gift of a child! Blessed then, above all human creatures, blessed the mother who received *that* child as a pledge of grace! For as such Mary received it, as a pledge and a seal that God was her Saviour. For that she thus received it, her song of thanksgiving proves: “My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.” Yes, Mary, thou hadst a good right thus to sing, for to what mother in Israel did God come so near in grace as he came to thee!

And now consider, what a time for the heart of the

waiting mother, the period of his education up to the day of his public manifestation to Israel must have been! Might she not from the first expect, that Heaven would shower down wondrous and unusual blessings upon this child? What a time of waiting that must have been? Will a Son, who has no other father but his heavenly Father, will *such* a Son ever be born? this was her first anxiety. Will he grow and expand amid all the dangers of childhood like the other children of Adam? Will not angels come and strew palms in his way as he walks? Will the kings of the earth not hasten to lay down their sceptres before the child? Will not the whole earth shout for joy when the divine babe first opens his eye upon the light of the world? O happy thou, modest mother, in that thou didst not indulge in such idle fancies; for thus, at least, wast thou deceived in none of thy dreams. For behold, when the royal child is born, the straw of the manger is his cradle; and throughout the wide dark night the world is dumb. But no, all is not mute in the regions of the night. If the earth is silent, the heavens will speak: and from the firmament a song of praise is heard

“Loud as from numbers without number, sweet  
As from blessed voices uttering joy.”

Earth echoed back the gladsome sound, for never had she heard such melody since the morning of creation, when the stars sang together, and the sons of God shouted for joy. And a star of heaven left its azure way to guide the wise men of the East to the place

where the infant Saviour lay. But all this was only the passing train of his celestial glory. For the Word has become flesh, and is now lower than the angels, and even in the cradle he is despised and rejected of men. Already round the manger rages the fury of Herod: and scarcely is he born when already the child must flee! And thus from the very first the mother of the Lord had to *wait*, and to *believe* what she could not *see*. And what a trial of her faith, during those thirty years, in which, like a seed in the bosom of the earth, the glory of the only-begotten of the Father was veiled in obscurity. Thirty long years went by, and nothing occurred. Canst thou still wait and still believe, Mary? John the Baptist, when in his prison preparing for death, could, even at a time when the glory of the Son of God was beginning to unfold itself, send with carnal impatience to inquire, “Art thou He that should come, or shall we look for another?” And Mary, who knew more than John did, could wait all the thirty years, without uncertainty, without misgiving. I wonder if a gentle question would never rise to her lips? Surely she must have asked, if not by words, at all events with her maternal eye. But possibly what the Saviour afterwards said, “Woman, mine hour is not yet come,” he may have had occasion to say before. And doubtless that virgin soul would not need any other answer to make her content to wait, in patience and—in faith!

*As looking.* The time is at length fulfilled. Jesus is baptized in the Jordan, in order that he may be manifested unto Israel. On his return, he meets his

mother at a marriage festivity in Cana of Galilee. Now that he has been consecrated to the Messiahship, she thinks the time must have come at last, and so with all the modesty of a heart which in her Son sees her King and Lord, she summons him to action with the words, "They have no wine." We thought ourselves warranted in assuming that this mother had a deep and correct understanding of her Son, even though it may have been more a *feeling* than anything else. But is not this idea of ours contradicted by the request she now makes? What! shall the glory of God be revealed at a marriage? in a miracle of luxury and convivial superfluity? Thus many a one has doubtless asked. But, my friends, is it likely that the family with which the pious Mary stood on terms of friendship, could have been addicted to excess and dissipation? Can the family, which even on such an occasion was not in circumstances to furnish sufficient wine for their guests, have indulged in a superfluity of hospitality? No; they were poor and pious people, I make no question, just like Mary herself; and the mother well surmises what is in the purpose of her Divine Son when, with a view to rejoice the heart of such a household on the occasion of that family festival, she asks him to perform a work of love. Had it been otherwise, would he have granted what was requested, in such a superabundant measure? And thus was the glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father manifested for the first time in the circle of his disciples.

And now came the days in which the blind should

see and the deaf hear, and the dead be raised up again; when the heavens opened and the angels of God descended and ascended upon the Son of man. And what were the emotions which now filled that mother's heart? Think you they were only feelings of jubilee and triumph? O no! Even in this time of looking, there were, I think, for that maternal heart, amid many occasions of calm joy, also times of sorrow for the present, and of still darker presentiment for the future. Must she not have seen with her own eyes the contradiction of sinners against him? But why do I speak of the opposition of his people?—do we not read that even his own brothers and kinsmen did not believe in him? O that poor tender mother's heart, which even among her own children and immediate connections can find no heart by which it is understood, into which it may pour its sorrow, and with which it may share its calm and holy joy! And what must she not have feared from the future! The aged Simeon had turned to *her* when he said, "This child is set for a sign, which shall be spoken against, and a sword shall pierce through *thine* own soul also." And we read immediately after, that "Mary kept all these sayings in her heart." Ah yes, a mother's heart does not soon forget sayings like that. When at the word of his mouth, the blind saw, and the dead came out of their graves, when sinners who had found mercy fell upon their knees before him, and the children cried Hosanna!—doubtless her heart shouted for joy—but all the while the eye of her soul saw the sword hanging over his head, and over her own! Therefore if

she rejoiced it could only be with trembling. The time of looking was thus also a time of proving for her, days of constant conflict between hope and fear. The sword had already begun to pierce her soul. Already had the separation in her faith, between what was earthly in it and what was heavenly, begun: and the final sorrow was to perfect that.

*As tried.* Mary does not often come before us during the period of our Lord's active life—alas! he is hers no longer, then; he belongs to the world! “Who is my mother? and who are my brothers? He that doeth the will of my Father in heaven”—that word she must from that time learn to understand, and that word also has its work to do in her soul, piercing into soul and body, joints and marrow. She appears but seldom in his company from the period of the commencement of his ministry; but when the Son of God went up for the last time to Jerusalem, to that altar of sacrifice where so many prophets of the Most High had shed their blood, there to fulfil the counsel which God had appointed, the mother cannot have been absent then. And so we find her at the last Easter feast in Jerusalem: we had almost lost sight of her in the course of the previous history, but she appears again beneath his cross. Yes, there she stood through those six weary hours, from the third hour to the ninth, there she stood gazing upon that countenance “full of wounds and blood, full of scorn and pain,” and upon the beloved head with its thorny crown. She saw that head surrounded with the light of Heaven's majesty, when he said to the dying thief,

“This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.” She saw it in the darkness and gloom of death, when he cried, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!” There she stood when, at the sixth hour, darkness enwrapped the cross, and nature put on her robe of mourning because the Lord of nature was dying. There she still was, as even in the midst of the death-struggle he turned his eye upon *her* and said, “Woman, behold thy son!” There she stood when he bowed his sorrow-laden head and cried, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit!”

Can we contemplate this touching scene without feelings similar to those which moved the ancient singer to exclaim:

See her standing by the cross  
In her untold grief so lone,  
Ah! she weeps the double loss  
Of a Saviour and a Son!  
Who her weary woe can see  
And not weep in sympathy?

Mary! then was the true fulfilment of that word of prophecy, then indeed a sword pierced thy soul! Surely, then, everything that was earthly about her love decayed and fell away. We do not find her at the sepulchre of Jesus. When they all went with their spices to anoint his body—Magdalene and Salome, Joanna and the other Mary—the mother of the Lord was not with them. No, *that* day had broken her heart, and now she could only weep and pray. But comfort, Mary! What did thy Saviour say? “A woman, when her hour is come, hath sorrow; but as

soon as the child is born, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world." Comfort! in thee too shall the new man be born. Thy Son hast thou lost, but thy Saviour thou shalt find again!

Lastly, contemplate *the mother of the Lord as purified*. Mary, thy son liveth! We learn from a passage in Luke's gospel, that on the day of the resurrection, when the apostles were assembled together with closed doors, like a timid flock, the women had also joined their number. And doubtless in that happy hour when the disciples of Emmaus, returning to the little company, exclaimed, "The Lord is risen!" and at once the glad response burst from every tongue, "The Lord is risen indeed!" and when, immediately after, the Risen One stood in their midst with the resurrection-glory about his brow and the salvation of peace upon his lips—doubtless the mother of the Lord was present in that blessed hour. When Mary Magdalene first recognized him after his resurrection, she sinks down upon her knee and would hold him—Magdalene, hold him not, for sensibly he is thine no longer. Henceforth thou shalt know him after the flesh no more, but alone by faith. How must those last forty days, which elapsed before the Lord's ascension, have served to accustom the disciples to the thought that he was theirs thenceforward no otherwise than in a spiritual sense. Where then did he dwell during those forty days in which he comes to them only at intervals as an apparition from a higher world? Already he belongs to the earth no more,

already, although his real glorification has not yet begun. And Mary too must accustom herself to this, she must learn to bear the gradual loosening of the sensible tie which bound the Son to the earthly mother. The hour of his final departure came at length. The disciples go, in obedience to their Master, to the Mount of Olives, so recently the scene of sorrow, now to become the scene of parting. We do not read that the women accompanied them: it is possible, however, that here too they were not wanting. The cloud spreads out beneath him, the hands are raised to bless—hands which have blessed all his life long—he is received out of their sight. And of his disciples we read that “they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.”

And from that day forward, Mary lifts up her hands in prayer, to Him whom those hands had borne. For the season of trial has done its work, and has brought forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. And the sword which has so deeply pierced her soul has severed effectually the earthly from the heavenly in her love. Her Son has she lost, but she has found her Saviour! “Now ye have sorrow,” he had said when he was on the earth, “but I will see you again and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” And so to Mary he came again in the Spirit, and gave her a joy which no man could take away from her. And full of that joy she died in the arms of that disciple whom Jesus loved.

Beloved, the way which Mary went is our way too.

It is only through the death of the old man, that the new man can be born. The history of the Passion has opened for us a glance into some dark and deep abysses in the human heart; but let the case of the mother of our Lord teach us, that if the sin of man is great, the training grace of God is great too. And especially bear in mind that in our case, as in that of Mary, our love to the Lord must be purified by days of sorrow like hers. Is there not in all of us the germ of that love—of love to him who is so full of grace and truth? But, although Christ is *before* us, I fear we have not Christ *in* us. We love him because we see him with the mental eye, but we do not love him “whom we see not.” If we would learn *thus* to love him, if we would have our love ennobled and refined, if we would that Christ should take up his abode *in us*—then we must take our stand beneath his cross, and beneath his cross have our faith made pure. And should the sword pain you as it pierces your heart, still let not that make you swerve. When Mary breathed out her spirit in the arms of the disciple whom Jesus loved, O! then she had forgotten all the sorrows of her life, and her sighs had all passed away. And thus will it be with those of you who have undergone the purifying discipline of the cross of Christ. When the end draws near, all our sighs and tears shall have passed away, but our rejoicing over the new man which has been born beneath the cross, O! that shall remain with us, and it shall carry us over into eternity!

O eternal Love, thus do thou educate and train us

for heaven and for thee! Beneath the cross of thy Son, do thou purify our love to him of all in it that is sensible, of all that is passing, and even should it be amid a thousand pains, O! let the new man be born within us! Amen.

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## SERMON VII.

THE HISTORY OF OUR SAVIOUR'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION MAKES MANIFEST IN THOMAS WHAT A HUMAN HEART MAY BECOME UNDER THE TRAINING OF GOD.

JOHN xx. 29.—Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

BELOVED in the Lord:—The history of the Passion-week has opened to us many a deep and many a painful view of the human heart. But the narrative of the days which immediately follow the resurrection presents us with others which are refreshing and comforting. We witness changes coming over the hearts of the followers of our Lord, which disclose to us that those days, at once days of tears and days of transport, were for them a blessed time of spiritual training. We learn what can be made out of a human heart by the educating hand and guiding eye of the Lord. This has been already shown to us in the case of Mary. It now only remains for us, further, to illustrate the same truth as in the case of Thomas: and with him we shall close this series of meditations.

It were extremely desirable, beloved, that we had possessed a full account and biography of each of the Apostles. Would it not have been a special boon for you, ye students of theology, to have had such a record, you who are one day to go forth, like them, as messengers of the Gospel to men? As it is, however, it is only with regard to a few of the Apostles that we are in circumstances to form an opinion as to their natural character. Still we know enough to be able to say, that they were men of characters widely different: so that we may with confidence lay down this statement, that when Christ chooses his messengers, the consideration which influences him is not what a man is by nature, but rather what may be made out of him by grace. "A man must be drawn by the Father:" on that everything depends. And they all were drawn by the Father to the Son: Judas even not excepted. In proof that even Judas was drawn by the Father, we have the words of Christ himself, when he said that none of those whom the Father had given him were lost, save the son of perdition. (John xvii. 12.) The Lord chose, as you know, the twelve Apostles as representing the twelve tribes of Israel; but it seems to me, if we knew these twelve a little more intimately, we should find that they represent a great deal more than this, we should see in them types of the most widely different characters; nay more, I doubt not, that every one of us should be able to find the image of himself exactly reflected in one of those twelve men. There were men among them of whom one would say, that by na-

ture they were quite unsuited for the position assigned them in the kingdom of God, ay, even for that kingdom at all. And this we must say of Thomas. Thomas had a peculiarity with regard to which one really must think that it was of such a character as to render him unfit for the kingdom of God, to say nothing of the apostolic office. There are but three incidents recorded of him in the New Testament, and they all lead us to the conclusion that he belonged, indubitably, to that class of men, who, before they can believe, must first *see* with their bodily eyes. Scoffers talk of the Apostles as if they had been the most credulous people in the world. Now, of Thomas at least they cannot say this, for he was evidently by no means easy of belief, but was, on the contrary, one of those cautious and incredulous people who must feel the ground on which they set their foot, and who will make no leap over a ditch whose dimensions they have not first duly measured. Well, is it not strange to find such characters among the Apostles? Surely, of all others, such critical natures are least suited to be disciples of Him who said, "He who does not receive the kingdom of heaven as a little child, shall in no wise enter therein." Nevertheless we see that even such circumspect and sceptical characters are not necessarily on that account shut out from the kingdom of God. Take courage then, ye men with souls like Thomas, for the only thing really indispensable is, that *the Father draw the heart to the Son*. If you have this, then all is well, for whoever feels himself drawn to Christ may be quite certain that

Christ will *educate* and *train* him for himself. Let us, then, contemplate this in the history of Thomas; and let us take for our text those words in which the Saviour has described him, in what he *was* as well as in what he *wanted*: they occur in John xx. 29.

*“Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.”*

Let us contemplate this saying of our Lord *in itself*, *in its application to Thomas*, and finally, *in its application to ourselves*.

Is not this a strange saying? Have you not heard it often in the mouth of the scoffer? The Proverb says, “Who soon believes is soon deceived.” And certainly for the affairs of every-day life, this maxim of believing what is not seen does not hold good, as Scripture itself admits. We find it said in the Bible, and in that very book of the Bible which contains what people call the maxims of worldly prudence—in the Proverbs of Solomon—that “a fool believeth everything;” and in Sirach we read, “Believe not all that thou hearest, for he that believeth quickly is thoughtless.” And, indeed, what would become of our earthly life, if one were to make it a rule everywhere to believe without seeing? However, my friends, we know that our Lord Jesus Christ did not come into the world to instruct us how to plant and to sow, how to make bargains and carry on business, and so this saying is not intended to be a maxim to regulate the transactions of civil life, but a rule to guide us to *eternal life*. Nevertheless, let me pause

a moment to glance at the relations of this our earthly life. You ask, what would become of it, if people were everywhere to believe before they saw. But, on the other hand, let me ask, what would become of us, if we never *did* believe before we saw? if the wife did not believe the husband, the child his parents, the friend his friend? What would become of trade and commerce, of human intercourse of every kind, if faith and mutual confidence were taken away? Or, if the husbandman would not go to the plough until he was certain that Heaven would send no failure of his crops, and the seaman would not spread the sail to the breeze until he was certain that no storm would send him to the bottom of the ocean? I ask, how have men performed their proudest achievements, by circumspection and distrust, by calculation of probabilities, or by the power of faith and confidence? Take the noblest deeds of the greatest warriors, and do they not themselves acknowledge that it was that internal confidence which lies beyond all calculation and all theories of probabilities; that inspiration of the moment in junctures calling for immediate decision, that raised them to be the rulers of destiny. Take away confidence and faith out of human life, put everywhere circumspection and certainty in their place, and you take away from human life not only one of its most powerful impulses, but also a source of its purest joys.

But unquestionably the domain to which this saying of our Lord properly belongs, is the domain of *religion*; in proof of which, instead of speaking of the religion of a nation, people are accustomed to speak

at once of their *faith*. There are, as we have just seen, some things in common life, to the existence of which no eye-sight can testify, which can be laid hold of by faith alone, as, for instance, the trustworthiness of a friend, or the success of an enterprise. But religion has to do *exclusively* with such things. "Faith," says the Epistle to the Hebrews, "is the certain assurance of things hoped for, and" (for thus it runs according to the original text) "the proof of things not seen." Faith, then, is a conviction of divine things, which is grounded on the internal testimony of the Spirit so strongly, that the apostle does not hesitate to call this conviction an evidence or proof. And with what other eyes than the eyes of faith is it possible for a man to see heaven and hell, God and the devil, blessedness and judgment, forgiveness of sins and damnation—with what eye but that of faith can a man see all these things? But, perhaps, you say it is otherwise with those works of God in history. But tell me, have those deeds no other evidence for us than that of any other historical fact? Have the manger of Bethlehem and the Mount of Transfiguration, the cross of Calvary and the ascension from Mount Olivet, the bread that five thousand ate, and Lazarus who was raised from the dead—have all these things for us no other kind of certainty than that with which we receive any other narrative of history? Or is it not rather true that they too are united by a sacred bond to our inmost heart, and are merged in that testimony of the Holy Ghost, which speaks to us of Christ as the Son of the living God, and of the Bible

as the word of God? Have not those facts their deep-convincing power for us, through their connection with that sacred truth, on behalf of which the Spirit of God gives such incontestable testimony in our hearts? And do you not feel that, in proportion as the record of the Holy Scriptures is left without this connection with our most sacred convictions, they lose for us their certainty and their power? But what? Have I forgotten to speak of an eye for divine things which looks far beyond the eye of faith as it looks beyond the eye of sense? Have I forgotten the noblest eye for divine things, the eye of science? But why do I ask if *I* have forgotten it? *Christ forgot it*, when he directed Thomas away from the eye-witness of sense to *faith* instead of science.

My friends, let us not ignore the true position and dignity of faith. It is science, you say, that furnishes you with evidence in divine things as well as in others; but what, let me ask, what is it that impels you to go in search of that evidence at all? Were it not that the eternal truths were entwined by faith around your inmost heart, ay, and had you not a faith in divine things or ever you are aware, would you let these scientific investigations cost you labour and pain even for a single minute? Do you not hear sounding from a thousand lips, on the right hand and on the left, "*I ne'er the might of such a longing knew.*"

That bursting germ from which the impulse towards divine things grows, is—O doubt it not!—is *faith*. But this knowledge must also prove itself to be a power in life, for much depends on that. And how

otherwise can this happen than thus, that this knowledge re-acts upon the heart, and plants faith there. Every one of you must have felt that it is possible to know a truth intellectually, without its becoming a power in your life. That it never can become until it is deeply experienced, until it beats in your every pulse, until it breathes through all your soul. Dare I call a truth really *mine* for which I have not found a testimony in that region of my mind which is preëminently myself in my own internal consciousness and experience? Look at history, and what do you see there? What gave the martyr that joy with which, for his God, he could mount the martyr-pile, and look with steady eye into the surrounding flames? Was it the series of proofs of the being of that God which he had conned in the dust and toil of the schools? Or, when the icy hand of death is laid upon your forehead, will a chain of subtle reasonings be the refuge to which you resort, in order to find support and strength to look the king of terrors in the face like a man, and with an "I know Him in whom I have believed," go away into eternity? O my friends, even if our knowledge really were the clue which could lead us safely through the labyrinth of life, even were it the guide to bring us across life's thorny paths, still, believe me, it is not to be relied upon in the hour of death. In that hour the light of evidence fades away from before the clearest mental eye, and the only support then, is in the strength of faith. And so we may say: that as faith in divine things is the root from which, pressed forward by the impulse to-

wards the light, the tree of all knowledge in divine things shoots up: so to this root the tree must ever bend down its branches. Knowledge does indeed impart light to the first obscure impulse of faith; but the power which bears thee through life, and holds thee up in death, is faith alone.

Thus we have seen what believing is; and now let us turn to the disciple who would see before he believed. Thomas has already come before us as a slave of eye-sight, and one poor in the celestial power of faith, in that portion of the sacred narrative to which, on a recent occasion, we directed your attention. I refer to the trait which is recorded of him when the Lord was preparing to go into Galilee, and the disciples were endeavouring to dissuade him from it because of the danger of the journey. With that strong internal confidence which guided all his steps, the Lord referred them to that hour in the world's timepiece which the Divine purpose had appointed, which could not strike before he had accomplished his work. "Are there not twelve hours in the day?" he said. If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not." With this calm assurance the Saviour spoke. "Let us also go with him, that we may die with him," cried Thomas! Yes, these words are doubtless a proof of his love; and in this respect we may well humble ourselves before him, for his love to the Lord is so great that to him the thought of dying is more tolerable than the thought of parting from his Master. But for his *faith*, it must be confessed, those words do not say much. Had it, indeed, been the utterance of a heroic

courage, looking steadily in the face the fortune God had allotted to him, that would have been a very different thing. But it is the speech of a feeble pusillanimous spirit, which would fain flee from the destiny God appoints to it, if it could. As far as he could calculate, he saw only danger. But, Thomas, why canst thou not look in faith to that finger of the world's clock to which thy Master directs thee, why canst thou not believe as he tells thee, that that finger cannot point to the twelfth hour one moment sooner than in the eternal counsel of God, the time is come? And if that time is already come, and already the twelfth hour is striking, why dost thou look with faint-heartedness, and not with joy, upon that death which comes to thee not by human appointment but by the will of God? But as he only calculates and does not believe, he can only see what happens upon earth, not what is decreed in heaven.

We recognize this same reflecting spirit in another passage, where, however, it shows itself in an inoffensive way. When the Lord, who had so long spoken of his going to the Father, said to the disciples, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know," Thomas puts the question, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest, and how can we know the way?" He wishes clearly to understand the whole, and who would not approve of understanding in its proper place. But understanding has its limits—there are boundaries which it cannot pass—wide regions where it cannot come. A pilgrim's staff is a good thing so long as one treads the earth, but whoever wishes to go to heaven requires wings, and the spirit's wing is *faith*.

Thus diffident as we have described him, Thomas now went up to Jerusalem to that last feast of passover with a fearful and doubting heart. And the fulness of time was now come, and the finger of the great world-clock pointed to the twelfth hour of which the Saviour had spoken; and the twelfth hour struck, and it was night. But the terrors of Gethsemane and Calvary at length passed over the disciples, and the quiet Sabbath dawned, after that eventful week, but ah, not their hope, for the Sun of their life had set, and might never rise again. And now that for the calculating and the unbelieving all was over, I wonder what were the feelings of Thomas? Even the other disciples had, as we know, no certain hope that the Sun of their souls would rise from the darkness of death in brighter and imperishable glory. But one thing they knew, that he *would* certainly rise again in some way, that *all* was not over. The state of their feelings at that time is very clearly seen from those words of the two disciples of Emmaus: "We trusted," said they, "that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel; and besides all this, to-day is the third day since those things were done." Now only they could speak thus, who, although without any certainty *what* should happen, nevertheless were convinced that *something* must happen—and that the history of the Redeemer of Israel could not close in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. In this twilight of hope did they go, on the morning of the third day, to his grave; and when at length he for whom they longed was restored to them again, so lively was their

hope that faith was easy for them, and they at once believed that it was He. But faint-hearted Thomas, how was it then in thy soul? After the sun had set, did a gloaming of hope remain also for thee, or was it altogether night with thee? It must have been night with Thomas, for had he still cherished hope, it would not have been so difficult for him afterwards to have believed. Then again, had he too felt confident that all was not over, and that it was impossible that all the hopes of this mortal life lay for ever buried in the tomb of Joseph, surely the faintest sound of the intelligence of that Easter-morning would have sufficed to set his heart on fire. How must then the testimony of his own heart have supplied any want of certainty and force in the testimony of his friends. What! couldst thou stand in that circle where, but a few hours before, fear had sat on every face and a tear on every eye, but where now the words, *He is risen!* *He is risen!* ring from every joyous tongue; and couldst thou stand alone doubting then? Did no amen of hope arise within thy heart? Couldst thou deliberately require three proofs that he was risen, ere thou wouldest believe? "*Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe?*" O too circumspect and cautious soul! how feeble must thy *hope* have been, else had *faith* not been so difficult for thee. And yet, beloved, his doubt is a matter of deep interest to us. All things must work together for good to them that love God. And the effect of Thomas's doubting is

designed to be, to prevent us from doubting. Thomas doubted thus, that all who doubt like him might be convinced like him.

You are astonished at his scepticism; be astonished then likewise at his faith, after the Lord had, in infinite condescension, satisfied even the presumptuous demands of his doubt.

Eight days had passed away; for the believing followers of Christ, days of calm contentment, though doubtless not unmixed with anxiety and longing, but for Thomas they had been days of comfortlessness. Once more Jesus stood in the midst of them with the salutation of peace again upon his lips. The superior knowledge by which, as the Lord at once gives the disciples to know, he is aware of his daring speech, must at once have gone home to his heart. Now, Thomas, thou hast what thou wantedst, put him to the proof, behold he offers himself to thee. But lo! all his tests are forgotten in the very moment when he could apply them: and the power of faith which had never been altogether extinguished in his heart, but only suppressed, in a moment makes good its rights. The beloved countenance of the Holy One is there before him again, and upon its features the light of the resurrection-morning rests. The beloved voice, so often heard before, again falls upon his ear. What need that he should stretch forth his hands to touch his Lord, does not his heart feel him nigh? Yes, it is he, it is he! who else could it be but he? and falling on his knees, he cries: "My Lord and my God!"

This expression, in which is summed up all the

experience of his heart during those three years which he had passed in his Master's company, was the highest that an Israelite could use. See in it a proof how strong and true the bond was which, in spite of all his disbelief, still knit him to his Saviour. See in this a proof that throughout the whole period of his intercourse with the Lord, the rays of his divinity must have penetrated and warmed his cold, unbelieving heart. All this is now disclosed in a single moment. Doubt has lain upon his heart only as a thin layer of earth. And now that the sun puts forth his might, the hidden germ of faith shoots up with power. He had been drawn by the Father to the Son, and that hour completed his spiritual training. So he now goes forth in the troop of the warriors of the cross; and he takes with him that word of warning, which he received as a legacy from his Saviour, "Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." And O! with what power will he preach that truth to others after his own deep experience! We find in history, as many of you know, some record of his apostolic labours. He bore the word of the cross to Parthia, perhaps also to the distant Indies. And in modern times there have been discovered among the mountains of Media a Christian people whose fathers were originally Israelites, who were converted by the instrumentality of the apostle Thomas, the founder of their Church.

If we now turn our eye once more from Thomas to ourselves, we shall find that it is generally among the circle of the disciples of science that spirits like

his are to be found. These often lack the courage in presence of intellectual difficulties and scruples to make up their minds to perform a heroic act of faith, and cut the knot they cannot untie. Such are, in the language of the apostle, "ever learning, and never coming to the knowledge of the truth." Young men, are there not many of those unfortunates to be found among you, whom this world has already cast off, and whom heaven will not take in? Whenever you would make a fresh attempt to soar above the world, alas, there is the two-edged sword of an intellectual objection, ready to cut the sinews of your heaven-bound wing, and bring you down again to the clods of earth. But think not, ye disciples of science, that the sad prerogative of such conflicts is assigned alone to you.

O my friends, if it be true that believing is nothing else than holding to the unseen as if it were seen, and if by nature we are all carnal, and therefore cleave to what is seen, then there can be no Christian who has not this fight of faith to fight, for it is indeed nothing else than the struggle of the spirit against the flesh. Was there ever a true Christian who attained to the experience, that by his own works no flesh can be just before God, without having first a long and weary warfare to wage with the human understanding which pleads within him the cause of the self-righteous heart. Has any one ever been brought from the heart to believe in a Father in heaven, who is reconciled in Christ, without having first had to engage in many a fierce conflict with the thousand-fold "No" raised in opposition to that truth by the natural understanding,

which pleads the cause of the accusing conscience? Or, has any one ever been able, when hard pressed in life's extremity, or amid the terrors of death, to hold fast his faith in God, without having to combat against the oft-repeated "No" of the natural understanding which clings to the seen alone? Then why do we subscribe the confession that no man can be saved by his own strength or reason, if it is not that faith which frees us from everything that is of ourselves, is a thing so hard for us, is a thing which God alone can work in us? And therefore I say those words, "Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed," are addressed not to the learned only, but to all of us, to men and women, young and old, learned and unlearned alike. And for all of us alike is the history of Thomas recorded for our consolation, that we may learn what a strong and mighty thing faith is, which can triumph over all intellectual scruples, which is capable of making a new man in Christ Jesus; and that we may know that in the school of the Lord Jesus even the most unbelieving natures may be transformed into children of God. Or, to sum up the whole in one word: Brethren, the man who, drawn by his heart, comes to the Saviour, he will in no wise cast out, be that man who he may, for in election it does not depend upon what one is by nature, but upon that which by grace he may become.

O Lord, look upon us. We believe, help our unbelief! O Lord, we come to thee, for we know not to whom else we can go; O! do not cast us out! Amen.

## PART II.

### THE SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OF CHRIST.

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#### SERMON I.

##### JESUS IN GETHSEMANE.

MATTHEW xxvi. 36-46.—Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again; for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.

BELOVED in the Lord! Christmas and New Year's-day are gone, and already I call upon you to "go up with me unto Jerusalem." We shall begin to-day

our Good-Friday and Easter meditations. There are not many texts suitable for Christmas in the New Testament—but for Easter and for Good-Friday there are many—so many, that it is impossible to exhaust them. We have, on a previous occasion, considered together the revelation of the human heart, as it is exhibited beneath the cross of Christ. And in this respect we have contemplated the heart of a Caiaphas, a Peter, a Thomas, and a Mary. We saw that the heart of man is only rightly revealed, when it is brought beneath the cross of Christ. It is true, the Christian congregation stands in need of moral sermons, and the preacher must descend, with the word of Christ in his hand, into the heart of man; but it is ever to him most rejoicing and refreshing, when he can look into the heart of Christ himself. The difference is, as when one, standing high in the mountain air, sees the spring rise out of the rocky mountain-side, and when, standing in the valley below, he beholds the copious stream, which, as it flows, spreads blessing and fertility all around. And may God grant that you may know in your deep experience, that a power goes forth from the word which testifies of Jesus, which makes men whole.

We shall view the heart of Jesus in Gethsemane, on the way to Golgotha, on the cross. Arise, and let us go this day in spirit to Gethsemane, and there behold the heart of our Saviour, in order that we may thereby learn how we may drink the cup of sorrow, when it shall be handed to us. Listen to the words of the Holy Scripture, as we find it in Matthew xxvi.

36—46 : “*Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And he cometh unto the disciples and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What! could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.”*

It may not have been half an hour before, that the Lord had uttered so solemnly the intercessory prayer. That was not like the prayer of a dying man, but rather as of one already glorified. And behold! around that sacred head, where but a little time before

the light of glory shone, ah! what heavy clouds are gathering now. And yet this contrast, this change of light and darkness, is not unintelligible. The man who has not, in an unnatural way, repressed his feelings, will always find, in those hours when he has some heavy trial to bear, that, with whatever strength and decision he may have surrendered his own will to the will of God, and however clearly and distinctly his eye may perceive the real tints of approaching morn looking out from behind the night-clouds of sorrow, nevertheless, when he really enters into the cloud, a cold chill passes over his soul, and the convulsions of sorrow overpower him.

These will be moments, isolated indeed, but just on that very account all the more severe: in every case suffering demands its due. When once this tribute has been rendered, it is enough. Thus how often, even after the sky has cleared up, do we see a single storm-cloud discharge its burden of thunder, lightning, and rain, and it is not till the last drop has fallen, and the last thunder has pealed, that serenity and calm are restored. This natural feeling of pain resembles the heat of summer and the cold of winter. There are cold summers and there are warm winters, but, at least for some days in the season, winter and summer must assert their right, and when they have once done so, it is enough.

The Saviour too has in this hour to pay his tribute to suffering. He will do it now when unseen by any but his disciples, that he may stand as a hero when he must front his enemies. So may it be with us also,

brethren, when the clouds of sorrow gather round us with all their terrors. Sorrow must have its due, but let it be paid in solitude, where no human eye, or at least none but a friendly one, is by to see. And then let the tears be quietly dried, when we go out again before men, that we cause not any offence to the Saviour's name.

Like a flower whose root's unseen  
While the bloom appears,  
A smile beams on the Christian's life  
Which springs from hidden tears.

If we look into the Saviour's heart we shall see how a *yes* and a *no* are in conflict there: the *no* is human, the *yes* divine, and divine is the final decision. There is a human *no* in his heart as he realizes the hour when his own extremest suffering and his people's extremest guilt shall be brought awfully near to each other, nay, shall consume one another. "O Christ! the leaders of thy people, of the people of thy choice, will let their enmity against thee rise to the highest pitch of fury; ay, they will even lay hands on thee, on thee the centre and seal of all their promises." His heart cries No! "One of thy chosen will betray thee, another of them will deny, all of them will forsake thee." His heart cries No! "The guilt of the people and of mankind, which they have committed against thee, will weigh down thy heart and bow thy head, as if it were thy righteous doom." No! cries his heart with abhorrence. And indeed how could he then have answered otherwise? Had any other than this been his answer, could he then have loved man-

kind? Could he even have felt as a man feels, if, in view of this final catastrophe, he had not with all his might answered No! But perhaps you are thinking of him of world-renown, that greatest among the heathen, of Socrates—before whose death-struggle there lay no Gethsemane. Do you ask why *that* man whom no fainting of spirit, no bloody sweat awaits, why, with such a calm smile of irony, *he* takes the cup of poison which his accusers, in the bitterness of their hate, present to him? He was great indeed, that greatest among the heathen that know not God, but in that cold smile on the very verge of that last, that most momentous step which man can take, I find not his greatness. It does indeed appear great that he did not tremble at the step he was taking into a land which to him was really a land unknown, which was disclosed to him only by the faint and feeble light of a presentiment of the heart. But had he not been greater still, if, even in him, who with all his wisdom, was after all but a sinful child of man, the thought that he must soon stand before his Judge, had driven the blood quicker and hotter through his veins? Had he not been greater if a feeling of pitying sympathy for the guilt which his accusers were incurring, and for the blindness of his fellow-countrymen, had crimsoned his cheek and darkened his brow with sorrow? But the man who, in the days of his life, instead of pitying the sinners, has ironically laughed at the fools, such a one will find something to smile at even in the deepest blindness of his people. O! the guilt of such is indeed not once to be measured with the guilt of

the chosen people, that people who outraged him on whom all their promises hung, the holy Lamb of God; and yet, had there been in the heart of the Grecian sage but a spark of the holy sympathy of Jesus with sinful humanity, surely then a shade of sorrow must have passed over the smiling countenance! No! the Saviour could not have been so holy, so loving, and so great, and the guilt of his murderers could not have been so enormous as it was, had he thought on that hour without the sweat of agony, or had he gone to meet it with only that horror of death which all other children of men experience. But was it really sorrow on account of his own suffering only, that so afflicted and prostrated his soul? Were this the case, for whom, I ask you, had the tears which he shed on his last entrance into the city, when he cried, "O! that thou hadst known the things which belong to thy peace!" for whom would *those* tears have flowed? Can you doubt that he who then wept at the thought of the guilt his own people were so soon to incur, did now in Gethsemane feel the weight of this sorrow also? And when on the way to the cross the women of Jerusalem, in their sympathy, mourned for him, was it *his own* sorrow that engrossed his thoughts and filled his soul when he cried, "Weep not for me, weep rather for yourselves"? No, believe me. On every occasion when he is seen to shudder at the thought of his sufferings, it is because he is looking down into the abyss of his people's guilt, which these sufferings disclose. Thus it was too on that occasion, when, long before the wings of death began to flutter around him,

he cried, “I am come to kindle a fire on the earth, but I have yet a baptism to be baptized with, and how do I long for it to be accomplished!” If then it cannot be denied that the horror with which the Redeemer contemplates death is at the same time a horror at the thought of the guilt of humanity, then was his answer all the more on that account a real human *no*, when he prayed, “If it be possible, let this cup pass!”

But along with this human No, there was also, from the very first, as we must believe, a Divine, deep-seated Yes, in his heart. What I mean is, that from the beginning he knew to what end he was in the world, he acknowledged a Divine necessity which determined every step he took. “Must not Christ have suffered those things, that he might enter into his glory;” such is the question which he put to his disciples after the resurrection, as he opened up to them the Scriptures. From this we see that he had read with his enlightened eye his own history in the prophecies of the Old Testament from the first. You know the prophecies of Isaiah, that gospel-book of the Old Testament, and there you have learned to recognize the noble form of the true suffering servant of God. “He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.” How often in its musings must the spirit of our Lord have been absorbed in these verses. He

did not require to ask, like that chamberlain of whom we read, “I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this?” In this crape-covered mirror the Saviour beheld the reflection of himself, and saw, long before they arrived, the days of his sorrow. They had ever, from the very first, been before his eyes. Does he not already, at the first passover in Jerusalem, speak to Nicodemus of the Divine necessity, according to which he is to be raised upon the cross: “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” And in how many sayings does this *must* recur? “Except a grain of corn fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone.” “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” “The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many.” Yea, he even prays in the passage before us, “If it be possible, let this cup pass;” a saying hard to understand, when we remember that it was but a few hours before that he had actually instituted the memorial of his death, when he appointed the sacrament of the Supper, that he had actually preached of the blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Then the Divine necessity was full before his soul, and now he speaks of a possibility: “My Father! if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!”

And yet he to whom it has been assigned to experience to the uttermost the fire of trial, to whom his God has seen meet, at one period or other in the course of his life, to allot such tests as Abraham had, and such hours of affliction as Job knew, such a man

will be able to understand this, which to others appears so mysterious. He will remember how, at such seasons, all that a man has known and experienced retires into the background, and not a single idea or emotion remains before the soul save that one, all-absorbing thought of pain, which in its insuperable greatness fills the eye of the soul, and shuts out all other thoughts from its memory and regard. One may know ever so certainly and distinctly that the cup, the bitter cup, must be drunk, and yet the soul will cry, "Lord, is it possible; Lord, is it possible?" And, even if the decree of God was graven in stone before the soul: "Soul, thou *must!*" still the soul would cry, "Lord, is it possible!" It is indeed only those among you, who are no longer apprentices in the school of affliction, that know this kind of wrestling with God; but you also will be able to bear testimony to its truth. With us, indeed, it is only for a few hours, or perhaps half-hours, that the inner eye of the soul is so covered with tears, that it can indeed see nothing else but those tears. With our Lord, however, this state did not last for hours, with him it is scarcely a minute in duration, for see how he gives expression in almost the same breath to both—both to the wish of his heart, bound with anguish, and to his consciousness of the divine, holy necessity of the case: "If it be possible, let this cup pass;" but in the same sentence he adds, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." These two points of view come separately before his mind, in his contemplation, only; in reality, they are ever united; and they are viewed

apart only to be instantly united once more. And also in our Saviour's view you see how clearly the two are brought together, when, the second time, returning from his disciples, he says, "O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done." The cup is bitter, and, in view of its bitterness, purely human feeling can never do otherwise than refuse or be unwilling to drink it. But he lets a little drop fall into the cup, which is sufficient to make its contents sweet, and that drop is the short phrase, "God wills it." When he comes back from his disciples the first time, that little drop is not as yet thoroughly mixed with the other contents of the cup; and the very point of conflict is to make the divine sweetness transfuse the human bitterness. And so when Christ says, "Rise, let us be going," the bitterness has been swallowed up by the sweetness, and made wholly to disappear; and, as the sun, which in the morning a stormy cloud had covered, rises in majesty in the heavens, serene and unclouded, the Saviour advances from beneath the darkness of that cloud of woe, and accosts his enemies with the question, "Whom seek ye?"

The decision cost our Lord a struggle. O brethren, it does cost man something to find that the cup which God holds out to him, and which in itself is so bitter, is notwithstanding sweet, just because *it is the will of God*. The decision cost our Lord a struggle. O how bitter must that cup have been to him at the thought of which he could be so faint and disheartened! Can you estimate what a weight must have

lain upon his heart when from his brow the sweat of agony fell in great drops of blood? But what most strikes the reader of this touching narrative is, the longing of the Saviour for human sympathy. He is in need of loving men to watch with him. "What, could ye not watch with me one hour?" Here may we also, brethren, draw something for our hours of suffering. Yes, it is human to be unwilling to watch through the hot and parching hours of life without the solace of sympathy and love. Human too is it, not to withdraw one's self when the children of affliction invite us to weep through their nights of tears along with them. *Our* friends, too, will grow weary and sleepy when called on to watch with us through long nights of sorrow—for O! it is easier to rejoice with those that rejoice than it is to weep with those that weep. The friends of the Lord were overcome with sleep, although they were required to watch only one single hour with their Master! How bitter must the cup have been to him, for he is now so disheartened: he had fought this very fight already, long before the bitter reality, in his foreknowledge of the future. The conflict in Gethsemane had been fought through even in the wilderness of Jordan, in the days of his temptation. Was there not, then, already at the outset, the whole of the way of the cross stretching before the eye of his soul, that way which, according to God's appointment, he had to go; and already at the outset did he make his decision; although he might have chosen joy, he chose the cross. And when, at the feast at Jerusalem the first rays of the glory

which was to follow from his sufferings shone around him, on the occasion when the Greeks desired to see him, as the thought of the inexpressible joy which his sufferings were to bring to the whole human race, came before him, then, along with the vision of his glory, the thought of what he must first endure seized his soul. “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour?’ But for this cause came I unto this hour.” You see, it is the same conflict: “Now is my soul troubled, shall I say, ‘Save me from this hour?’—but for this cause came I unto this hour!” It is the same human No, the same divine Yes, and the same divine-human decision. Thus more than once did the Saviour fight this fight, more than once did he wring from himself this decision. It is written of him, “My meat is to do the will of my Father.” Again, it is written of him that “he learned obedience by the things which he suffered.” The will of God was indeed meat to him; but to find that meat so distasteful to his humanity, to find it pleasant, was no easy matter. Only by exercise, only by suffering, only in repeated fights, in repeated decisions, was it possible that the Son of God could learn to do this. And none of you, my brethren, who have not learned obedience to the will of God, and the joy of that obedience in the school of affliction, have ever learned it. The fact that you wonder at these fierce conflicts, at these repeated decisions of the Lord, may testify to

you, either that you have not yet an idea, even the faintest, of the load that lay upon the holy soul of Jesus, because you are not yourselves holy enough; or, that you have not yet felt how great the lesson is which has been given you to learn: to be able in everything, even in what to the natural man is distasteful and unpleasant, to say, not in the spirit of a servant, but of a child, "Thy will be done!" "How sweet are thy words unto my taste."

Ah! most men do not understand even what sort of a decision is required of them in their hours of suffering. There are some who, without ever imagining that every affliction is sent by God charged with the teaching of a moral lesson, regard their endurance of those afflictions in the light of a meritorious work. But do not err: it was not by the crown of thorns alone that Jesus became the Christ; it is not, it never can be so. Others there are who look upon themselves as heroes, when they can *forget* their sufferings. That is, to say the least, *unnatural*. Is it not unnatural in an old man to act as if he were young, or when a lame man would leap as if he were whole? Thus, too, it is unnatural to wish to ignore and deny a burden under which we lie, by the decree of God. Nay more, it is ungodly; for why has thy God been pleased to smite thee with the rod, if thou art not to feel its smart; why has he poured out for thee the bitter draught, if thou art not to taste its bitterness? But thou wouldest escape from the school where God would teach thee, and because thou art ashamed of the bitter draught, thou wouldest drink it

with blinded eyes. Thou fool! is not the cup there, and must it not be drunk whether thou drink it with thine eyes open or closed? But we are not to take blindly, but as seeing men, all that God holds out to us. And to take it with open eyes means, to acknowledge the end for which it is given. Now, it is given us in order that we may learn the art of tasting what is sweet in the will of God, even when that will involves what is in itself bitter. This is what we are intended to learn. To pour the little drop “God wills it” into the bitter cup, and to mingle that little drop with the bitter contents, until the taste of the whole is sweetened. At present the most of you suffer, only because you *must*, and therefore as servants; but you should suffer as children, who suffer because it is the will of their father that they should, and who, because it is his will, make it also theirs. When one learns to view sorrow in this light, what a multitude of moral lessons open up to him. Then one need not wait for extraordinary seasons of affliction. Each little daily sorrow, every misunderstanding we experience on the part of our fellow-men, every little disappointed hope, every cross, every care, if only viewed in this light, becomes a great lesson to every Christian soul: he must not bear it as a servant, he must bear it as a son! O ye who know not yet the school of affliction, and the lesson that is there taught, go, learn it at Gethsemane! Learn it in contemplating the conflict which the holy heart of Jesus knew there, and let the thought of him be your consolation and your strength when the cup is passed to you! There you may once and again

have to bend the knee, before your breast is unburdened, and your brow again unclouded. The struggle may be so severe that in it the physical man may be quite shaken and shattered, and you may have to fight every inch of the way. And if one decision be not sufficient, another and another must be forced from you. O! in all these experiences your Saviour has gone before you, for he, even he had to learn obedience by the things which he suffered. Remember that with every new conflict this obedience becomes more and more our own, becomes more and more the law of our new life. Hence it is that the conflict recurs so often. If even with the Saviour the struggle had to be fought, and the decision to be made repeatedly over again, think what a very difficult task it must be to sweeten the bitter cup with the consideration that it is God who sends it. And even when the fight is over, and the victory won, above the shout of triumph may still be heard the groan of suffering nature. Do you not hear, after the decision of Gethsemane, and before the final "It is finished," the words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" May the soul-conflict of our Saviour in Gethsemane teach us that it is one of the highest works of our Christian life at all times so to permeate and transfuse the human *no* with the divine *yes*, that the final decision shall be divine!

The Christian lives, but lives to fight,  
He struggles on his way.  
Christ's people are his soldiers too,  
Christ leads them by his Spirit through,  
From strife to victory.

'Tis not the skirmish of an hour;  
Sin yields not at a blow:  
For pride of heart is ill to slay  
And what seemed overcome to-day,  
Will be to-morrow's foe.

O Lord! Thou who in all points didst become like unto us, yet without sin. O Lord! Thou who in the days of thy flesh didst offer strong crying and tears, in order that thy heavenly Father's will might be found sweet unto thee, grant unto us thy Spirit, that we may understand the lesson that is daily, in every sorrow, given us to learn. Grant us thy Spirit, that we may fight a good fight, and may never by succumbing enfeeble our spirit. O Lord! how beautiful is the crown which awaits us at the goal, do thou hold it ever before our soul! Amen.

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## SERMON II.

### JESUS AND HIS BETRAYER.

LUKE xxii. 47, 48.—And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

BELOVED! We have fought with our Saviour the fight in Gethsemane, and we have seen him come forth from the struggle victorious. As the rising sun before which a morning storm lay gloomily piled, comes forth in majesty when the thunder is over, and in

cloudless glory “flames in the forehead of the morning sky:” so the incarnate Sun of Righteousness rises in calm majesty from behind the clouds of sorrow which had surrounded him. Jesus comes forward from the interior of the garden, and advances into the presence of his betrayer and his judges. We shall in our meditation of to-day leave the scene where we have lingered, where we have seen him sweat as it were great drops of blood, and heard the words, “Not my will, Father, but thine be done,” resound through that lonely night. To-day we shall contemplate those last words that the Saviour addresses to his betrayer. We read in the 22d chapter of Luke, at the 47th and 48th verses, these words: “*And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?*”

Let us cast a glance on the *deed* of the traitor, on the *cunning*, the *terror of conscience*, and the *turpitude* of the act; then we shall look at the words of our Lord, and contemplate the repose, the love, and the sublime majesty of these words.

When Jesus gave the sop to Judas, and in answer to the disciple that lay on his breast, said, “He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it;” probably it was a struggle of many weeks, ay, of months, that was then finally decided. “And after the sop Satan entered into him” we read. (John xiii. 27.) So long as he was in conflict with this thought

of blackness he was still in the power of God: now the power of conscience prevailed, and now the temptation of Satan. When the decision was matured, he was from that moment in the power of Satan, and every step on the descending path led nearer to the abyss. He went out into the night—what a contrast! There, in that lighted room, they are celebrating the last feast of love, and he—he goes out into the night and to the children of the night. The arrangement had previously been made; nothing remained but to carry it into action. Mark in the first place the *cunning* of the deed. We know that “the children of the world” are, in general, wiser than “the children of light.” The serpent in paradise was wise too. Alas, that the noble gift of reason, which God had given to man, should itself, when once the heart becomes the servant of sin, be given over to that service! When that heart was right with God, wisdom was the noble offspring of reason; now, alas, all that is left is subtlety, and that a subtlety which works in the service of hell! O, do not deceive yourselves, those among you who imagine that by reason and science alone you can place yourselves secure above the power of sin: “where your treasure is,” says Christ, “there will your heart be also,” and where your heart, that is, the deepest bent and striving of your will, is, there will also your reason be.

Do you know how your reason will serve you in the service of sin? Before the commission of the deed it will suggest to you the means to be used, during its commission it will teach you to spread a veil over it,

and after the deed is done, when conscience begins to pour forth upon you the storm of its indignation, it will teach you how you may silence it with cunning excuses and with lying self-justification. Thus, and thus alone will it serve you. Because the heart of Judas was not with God, his reason was blind to the deed which he was about to commit. But it was not blind to the *means* by which the deed was to be carried out. It advised that the deed should be done under the cloak of night. It was a prudent suggestion in the interest both of his cause and in that of his conscience. It was prudent in the interest of his cause, because had the deed been committed by day, more swords, I think, than that of Peter would have leapt from their scabbards! The Lord had servants who would readily have risked their life for his sake. But the traitor would complete his work "in the time when men sleep." Now we know from the parables of our Lord, that it is in the time when men sleep that the evil spirit sows his tares. Then, in the interest of his conscience, the time was wisely chosen. He probably said to himself, "Betray him in his sleep, and then thou needst not look into his eye when thou betrayest him." Was *that* nothing gained? Doubtless it is a base act of treason to deliver up to his enemies a sleeping friend—and in this case, O, surely much more than a friend! But thus it must be, since conscience will be so cowardly that it dare not look him in the face! "Betray him while asleep," were a cunning thought—to deceive at once the friends of Jesus and the conscience of the traitor! However,

this part of his plot miscarries. In the house through which the way to the garden leads, he receives intelligence that the eye he fears so much is awake; that Jesus is in the garden, with his three disciples. How shall he now secure his prey? How shall he deceive his conscience? His cunning must devise new counsel. He knows of what his own cowardly soul is capable, and he suspects the same in the Lord:—he fears his flight. How shall he then secure his prey! He dare not approach with the loud voice of treachery; he dare not cry, This is he, seize him! He must come softly and unsuspected, like the serpent creeping along the grass. The armed troop wait at the garden-door, and the traitor advances alone, as if he were a friend come to visit the Saviour by night. Judas! amid all these different schemings, has no voice whispered in thine inmost heart? was there no remonstrance on the part of conscience, when the first step miscarried? Sin is ever on uncertain ground. It is wont to become alarmed and uncertain, when the first step falls out amiss. It requires the hardening of long years, before the sinner comes to feel the ground under his feet secure in his proceedings, so that he does not become alarmed when the first step fails. Beginners in crime cannot bear this so easily; they think at once that it is the ministers of divine justice which they see pursuing them. They shrink from every step, as if on the right hand and on the left gins were laid for them, as if the very next step they took might plunge them into an abyss. Do you not see in this a clear proof of the fact, that sin has no *right* in the world, that

although it exists, it exists as a thing already judged and condemned, that a moral Governor of the world has set his curse upon it, (as the consequences of sin so manifestly show,) that it is thus never a safe thing, that it is outlawed. Is Judas a beginner in sin, or has he already learned to make light of his conscience? O Judas! couldst thou not even then have entered into thine own heart, and have lent even then an ear to the voice within, as thou didst find waking the eye of Him whom only in sleep thou hadst thought to have betrayed? Did it not seem as if the finger of thy God was then pointing the glance inward upon thyself? Alas, in vain! Conscience may have then lifted up its voice ever so loud, he would only have thought how he could most skilfully contrive to deceive it. How apparent is it here that the cunning with which Judas meant by a kiss to deceive Jesus, was also intended as a device for deceiving *his own conscience*? That kiss of treachery discovers with what terror of conscience he had gone about the whole work, discovers also the fact that his sense of being conscience-stricken was most painfully oppressive at that very moment when he was forced to meet the waking eye of his Lord. That kiss was a sign of reverence and love. He thus thought he could administer a quietus to his conscience. But, even more than this, the thought that thus he would not require to look into the eye of Christ as the eye of a judge, he expected once more to be able to look on it as a friend looks into the eye of a friend. And hadst thou then the heart, O Judas, to look on him as a loving friend,

whom thou didst fear to look on as thy judge? He had the heart—but that too was no easy thing: how much more readily had he altogether dispensed with casting a last look on the eye of Jesus, whether as a judge or a friend. But he had no other choice. Do you imagine that Judas had *never* understood that look of love?—then indeed had his guilt been infinitely less. But he had: for the traitor too had once belonged to the number of those souls which are drawn by the Father to the Son; and this it is that makes his guilt of so deep a dye. “Those that thou gavest me I have kept,” says the Saviour, “and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition.” (John xvii. 12.) So even Judas was one of those whom the Father had given to Christ, the Father had drawn him to the Son; but he would not let himself be drawn; this it is which makes the deed so black. Even then a gleam of the light of heaven might have shone upon him from the eye of Jesus. But such a light was quenched in the blackness of his soul; or rather, may it not have become a burning firebrand there, which, kindled by that last look from Christ, would afterwards burst out in fury in his soul. He felt the power of that look, when, throwing the price of him that was valued into the treasury, he exclaimed, “I have betrayed innocent blood, I have betrayed innocent blood!” See how the innocent blood has been turned into a sea of fire that burns within his heart. And that the blood he betrayed was innocent, the last calm, holy look of Jesus testified. Thus it is that conscience does not take its leave of a man, even when

he has taken leave of his conscience. O! if there be some among you who have ceased to hearken to its voice, if not altogether, at least when it is lifted up against some favourite lust; and if, notwithstanding this, you feel that conscience has not forsaken you, O! recognize in it, I beseech you, the good angel of God. O Judas! even now thou mayst own thy Lord; even now thou mayst retrace thy steps. When Peter, after his denial of his Master, felt the rebuking glance of love, then, we read, he went out and wept bitterly. Judas too might have done this; but certainly it had been more difficult for him to have done so then, than it would have been an hour before; for the armed crowd now guarded the door of the garden, and his own accomplices would have arrested him in his flight. For the path of sin becomes with every onward step more easy; and the warnings and admonitions of conscience, those angels of God, when despised and unheeded, are changed into angels of vengeance, who stand in the way to prevent the hapless sinner's return, and urge him down the ever-stEEPENING descent. Thus the armed crowd behind Judas would now have prevented his egress. And thus the steps which a man takes in such a path become an armed crowd which hurry him involuntarily forward, and bar his retreat. And is not the fact that sin becomes at last involuntary, is not this one of the most fearful characteristics of sin?

That he should have betrayed the Son of Man with the sign of reverence and love, is a testimony to the terror of his conscience while committing the act; but

it is also a proof of the *turpitude* of that act. For with every step in the downward path of sin, the means by which the sinner would seek to purchase the silence of his conscience, become ever more censurable, ever more detestable. To have made use of that very sign of love, which as such is hallowed by all men, to have made use of *that* as a sign of treachery, who does not shudder at the very thought? Does not sin, and with reason, appear to us all the more horrible, in proportion as it employs as its means what is in itself holy? A theft committed by a depraved child, an assassination in a church, poison administered by means of the host, such are instances of the class of crimes to which that of treason by a kiss belongs. We are shocked at it because it is so base, so hypocritical, so false; even although we may feel that in this case the exercise of physical force by one of his disciples would have been perhaps even *more* revolting. Judas! what a firebrand must that kiss have become in thy conscience! Poor son of perdition, when thou touchedst those sacred lips, which were so soon to grow pale in death through that kiss of thine; say, didst thou not then think of those moments when, from that holy mouth, it was thy privilege to hear words such as besides no human mouth had ever spoken to thee? Didst thou not then call to mind the moments when thou durst look into that mild and holy eye without alarm of conscience, with blessed, rejoicing heart? Ah yes! that kiss *did* become a firebrand in thy soul!

Let us turn our eye from this sad treachery itself,

in order to direct our attention to the *words* of the Redeemer. We saw him rise a few minutes before, in the deepest perturbation of spirit, from that soul-conflict. And now observe what a divine *repose* is disclosed in the words with which he receives his traitor, “Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?” There is no ebullition of anger here: indeed, the pure mirror of that holy soul was ever unruffled by the storm of human passion. There is not even an expression of grief at the thought of the bitter cup of which that kiss was the immediate precursor. He thinks not of himself at all; he thinks only of the son of perdition; he has at present no eye for his own sorrow, but only for the crime of his betrayer. Do you not recognize in these words the deep calm of the Saviour’s breast that has followed the storm; the undisturbed repose which has succeeded that commotion which had stirred the very depths of his soul? We witness here, once more, that repose and self-possession of spirit which, in all his words and all his works, we have marked as one of his most rare and wonderful characteristics.

This is the last word that he exchanges with the son of perdition, and that last word is still a word of love. He had spoken so many words of love to him already, but they had passed away from his soul, as drops of rain which fall upon burning stones. Already Christ had said, “What thou doest, do quickly;” and it seems as if, with these words, he meant to give up the son of perdition to his doom, as if the Saviour were then surrendering him to hell;

but he has yet for him a word of questioning love. Of questioning love! he might have had a questioning word of thunder to hurl at his soul; he might at least have called down a woe upon him—but he does not rebuke, he does not imprecate. He does but put a question to him, and may we not say, as long as a question can be made to find a passage to his heart, so long we may surely hold it possible for that heart to respond to that question. *Some* sound in reply may even now be heard in the recesses of his breast. Even now the Lord does not appear to have pronounced over Judas that most fearful word that a sinner can hear, although one might have expected it after the words, “What thou doest, do quickly.” And to every child of perdition does the pitying heart of the Redeemer address the same question; and even should he be standing on the very brink of the abyss, if Jesus puts the question, an answer to it is still possible, a return is still possible. O ye who have not yet lent an ear to his questionings, would that, even in the last moments, you might hear them. But truly, after one has once and again heard him in vain, the capacity to hear becomes dull, and the questions of Jesus come upon the soul like the muffled sound of distant thunder. Then, even questions of love lose their power to awake; they can only alarm.

Could we but follow the life of a man who had walked in the ways of righteousness, and had subsequently fallen away from the truth, and could we number the questions of love which God had from the very first addressed to his heart, what a sad impres-

sion would be the result of such an exercise! At first, a timid, scarcely decisive, "Yes, Lord!" then one, loud and strong, would be his response. Then, as the sinner grew bold in iniquity, the "Yes" would become feebler and more uncertain, until in the end it died away altogether, or was, perhaps, changed into a "No" of bold defiance. When at the beginning the Lord put the question, "Will ye also go away?" Judas could understand it, and knew how to answer it. That was the question of love: alas, what was the state of his heart when this last was addressed to him!

It was not a thunder-word of rebuke that the Lord poured forth upon him, it was not a denunciation of woe; there was love, nay, there was even a ray of hope in this warning question. But, along with this, how distinctly here does insulted Majesty utter its voice! This love is no weak, sentimental emotion; he does not say, O dear disciple, how canst thou commit so great a crime against me, thy loving Master? No; the words are few, and solemn; and they bear the stamp of wounded love, the stamp of the majesty of insulted royalty—"Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" What we have characterized as most abhorrent in this kind of treason, that what men regard as the consecrated sign of love should be used as a cloak of iniquity, is precisely what our Lord brings prominently forward. But more than that, he points to the dignity of him who is thus given up to death. All human relationships fall into the background. Not a word to indicate that he whom he

was betraying is the traitor's friend and benefactor. "Thou hast betrayed the Son of Man," the man without fault, without sin, the man through whom alone it is that humanity rises to its true and proper dignity. See with what majesty the Lord speaks of himself. He does not place the traitor before a human tribunal, he brings him before the throne of God; for it is not merely against a human heart, against human feelings, that he has transgressed, but against the heart of God, in giving up the only-begotten Son of God. At that very moment, when the Saviour's human feelings might the most readily have spoken, it is the feeling of insulted Divine Majesty alone that speaks.—Alas! that word could be for Judas an angel of deliverance no longer; for that it was now too late: and since it could not be a delivering angel, it became an avenging angel which allowed the whole weight of his guilt to fall upon his conscience—the guilt of insulted Majesty. When that conscience cried out, "Thou hast betrayed innocent blood," he must add, Ay, and that innocent blood was the blood of the Son of Man, of the Saviour of Israel—and it was with the sign of love that I betrayed it.

And what does all this teach *us*? Does it all apply only to the case of a wicked man, and has it no concern with such pious people as we are? Is there, then, no one amongst us who is seeking to deceive his conscience? If so, has it not been your experience, that every step you leave behind you in the path of sin, rises up as a barrier to prevent your return, nay, becomes a minister of justice, impelling you on in the

downward course? Then are you ignorant of the questions of love with which the gracious Lord follows one even until he stands on the brink of the abyss? Are there none here who have betrayed the love of the Son of Man, and who are still betraying that love, day by day? We may not have come so far in the descending path down which Judas rushed, we may not be so near the abyss as he was; but every man is in that path who deceives his conscience, and consciously turns traitor to the love of the Son of Man. Ye secure souls! who as often as you hear the Divine call, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice," are content with thinking to-morrow will be time enough—let that word of alarm fall with new power upon your conscience, that a time will come when it will be said, "It is too late!" Learn from the example of Judas, that a time will come, if ye despise the grace of God, when God's angels of deliverance themselves shall become to your hardened hearts ministers of vengeance. Learn from his example, that he who in carelessness and carnal security is ever plunging forwards, without pausing to reflect, will find, when at length he has reached the fatal abyss, and fain would turn and go back, that he *cannot* go back; nay, the despair of his own conscience hurries him headlong down into the abyss. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! He that hath ears to hear, let him hear! Amen!

## SERMON III.

## THE SILENCE OF JESUS.

MATTHEW xxvi. 62.—And the high-priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?

WE have already listened to some of the words of Jesus in the time of his passion. The Lord has still many a great word to address to our heart and conscience from the history of that time. To-day, however, we will listen to the *silence* of Jesus, and let that speak to us.

The last word has been uttered which our Lord exchanged with the traitor; Jesus is delivered up to his enemies; Jesus is bound, and is conducted into the presence of his judges. After a hasty examination before Annas the high-priest, he is brought before his real judge, Caiaphas. It is midnight. The children of night have begun their dark work in the hour which could most truly be called their own, as our Lord himself said, “This is your hour, and the power of darkness.” It is midnight, the members of the high council have hastily come together—probably not in full numbers, as a decree of sufficient authority is not passed till early next day—the decree then passed is, “He is worthy of death.” There were in that council some who would never have concurred in that verdict of guilty, such as Nicodemus, and Joseph of Arimathea; but at this time they were probably not pre-

sent, and on the morrow they were out-voted. (Luke xxiii. 51.) False witnesses came and said, "He has said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days." And now we read, Matt. xxvi. 62, "*And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? But Jesus held his peace.*"

We read also in two other passages of Jesus being silent in the presence of his unrighteous judges. "And when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceeding glad: for he was desirous to see him of a long season, because he had heard many things of him; and he hoped to have seen some miracle done by him. Then he questioned with him in many words; but he answered him nothing." (Luke xxiii. 8, 9.) And, once more: "When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he was the more afraid; and went again into the judgment-hall, and saith unto Jesus, 'Whence art thou?' But Jesus gave him no answer." (John xix. 9.) In this repeated silence of Jesus in the presence of his accusers and of his unrighteous judges, there is a *testimony for him*, there is a *sermon for us*. This silence is a testimony for Jesus, for it testifies to the repose of his soul; then to his sublimity; and finally to his consciousness of the righteousness of his cause.

Not to answer cutting and unrighteous accusations in any other way than by silence, requires in the first place a deep repose of soul; and to this, the silence of Jesus in the presence of the high-priest and of his accusers gives testimony. You know, all of you, how false accusation causes the sickened heart to boil with

agitation, and how readily one seeks to give vent to the pent-up torrent of replication that fills his breast, in a flood of counter-accusations and counter-invective. We have, however, already cast a glance on the profound calm of the soul of Jesus, which succeeded to the violent perturbation of the garden. Let us then at once go on to consider the testimony which this silence of Jesus affords to his sublimity.

Would not any answer which he could have given have testified that the questioned stood on an equal footing with the questioner, the accused with the accuser? Being silent, is a testimony to the chasm between the two parties, a chasm so great that the very words of the accusation of the one cannot be so much as taken up by the other. So long as Jesus speaks, he is still knocking; when Jesus is silent, then it is that he gives up. It is only before those that he has given up that he is silent. His silence is a judgment. By his silence he judges and by his silence he condemns a high-priest, a king, and a governor. What effect on Herod the silence of Jesus had, when, arraigned before him as one accused, he answered nothing to his questions, we do not read. But of Pilate we read that he exclaimed in amazement, “Answerest thou *me* nothing?” He who breaks off in such a manner with his judges or accusers must, moreover, be possessed of the full consciousness that his fate rests in other hands than theirs. Speaking with reference to this silence of our Lord, Peter says, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not, but committed it to him

that judgeth righteously." See here the testimony of his consciousness of the rectitude of his cause. Even Pilate was sensible of this, although he was a man little wont to recognize any other measure of justice than that which is furnished by the scales which earthly power assigns. In surprise he exclaims, "Speakest thou not with me, knowest thou not that I have power to crucify thee, and have power to release thee?" And Jesus points him to the truth that the scales of justice were committed to him by a higher hand: "Thou couldest have no power at all against me, except as it were given thee from above." Thus it is that he places his own judges before the highest of all tribunals.

This calm, this sublime, this God-given silence, is charged with a lesson for us also, and we shall therefore dwell upon it a little longer. It opens up to us a question which, in many relations of life, is of the highest importance. If Jesus was silent before his unrighteous judges, and on the occasion of such an accusation, when should a disciple of Jesus, when brought before unrighteous judges, be silent, and when is it then for him a "time to speak?"

I am not surely in error when I assume, that many a one among you has proposed to himself this question in some fierce, hard-pressed hour of life. If this has not already occurred to you, rest assured it will be your experience, according as you learn more of men and of the human heart; and in proportion as you take the pattern of Christ more and more for a light to your feet. Ought not, let us ask, the disci-

ple of Jesus to be silent when his Lord is silent, and to speak when he speaks?

It is certainly possible in the presence of unjust judges to speak out of season, but undoubtedly it is also possible to be silent when we ought to speak. Jesus himself was not *always* silent in the presence of the unjust judge. When the high-priest said to him, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?" was Jesus silent *then*? No; then he spoke and testified, "Thou hast said." When Pilate asked him, "Art thou a king?" was Jesus silent then? No; then he spoke and testified, "Thou sayest, I am a king." And when before the high-priest one of the servants struck him with the palm of his hand, and said, "Answerest thou the high-priest so?" here again Jesus was not silent, but answered, "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil, but if well, why smitest thou me?" When is it then a time for us to be silent, and when is it a time to speak? It is a time to be silent when *complete insensibility, and irretrievable infirmity of will, or worldliness of mind* has deprived your antagonist of the capacity to understand. Thus was Jesus silent in the presence of Herod—thus was he silent in the presence of Pilate. It is a time to be silent when gross falsehood testifies against itself in the conscience of the accusers, that is, in the case of men whose hearts are so *irrecoverably hardened*, that with ears to hear still they will not hear. On the other hand, it is a time to *speak* when even with the grossest blasphemy it is still an *erring conscience* that

speaks: thus Jesus spoke in reply to the servant of the high-priest. Again it is a time to speak when the question at issue is not your own private cause but that of *universal truth*: thus Jesus spoke before the high-priest and before Pilate.

*It is, then, a time to be silent, when complete insensibility, and irremediable imbecility have deprived the accuser of the capacity to understand.* This was the case with Herod Antipas, Tetrarch of Galilee, in whose presence Jesus kept silence. Many may think that to all appearance he was deserving of a word from Jesus. Was he not “*exceeding sorry*” when he had to give his consent to the execution of John the Baptist in the prison? Do we not read in Mark vi. 20, the unexpected intelligence that he visited the prophet in his captivity, nay, that he even heard him gladly, and did many things according to his counsel? And we know that this Elias, this son of thunder, when he spoke with princes, was not like such court preachers as tremble before princes, because they do not make God their fear and dread. Assuredly *he* did not aim at pleasing men’s ears with soft, soothing words, but rather at reaching and arousing the conscience by the might of simple unvarnished truth. Thus the pleasure Herod took in this Elijah-like preacher is a circumstance which speaks certainly in his favour. Yes, even this Herod must have had his better moments, he must have had some interest in the things of God; and have we not a proof of this in the joy he feels at seeing Christ, and the hope he entertains of witnessing some miracle wrought by him. And yet, Jesus was

silent. It was the very silence of Jesus before him that condemned the man, for it showed, to the solemn warning of all, of what value the religiousness of a weak voluptuary is. For that he was such, history informs us, as well as the Divine record; we read of this servant of sin that he seduced the wife of his own brother. It was on account of this very crime that the Baptist gave him the rebuke in return for which that preacher of repentance received the reward of imprisonment. He who has become the servant of lust loses thereby command over his own will. Observe what in the case of this weakling is so hopeless—he permits the Baptist to preach before him, and yet he does not free him from his fetters; he honours him, and yet he allows the artifice of a woman and the intoxication of an evening entertainment to prevail with him, so as to make him deliver up to the hands of the executioner this man, so honoured by the whole people, and by himself also. So much is the religiousness of those servants of the flesh worth, who have no control over their own will. Their good intentions, fine discourses, fair pictures of imagination, alas, what becomes of them all when they are called to bring them into action? While their imagination is playing an idle game with religion, their will is all the while earnestly busy with sin. This royal weakling who, for the sake of a woman, had given up into the hands of the executioner a man, whom he himself recognized as a prophet of God, is held by Jesus unworthy of a reply, because, on account of his irremediable weak-

ness of character, any reply would have been lost upon him.

In the case of Pilate, too, it might appear at first sight as if his question was deserving of an answer. The whole appearance of Jesus had already impressed him as something strange and unaccountable. When the Jews said, He made himself the Son of God, we read of him that "he was the more afraid." Even in this man's empty and thoroughly earth-bound soul, there arises a question which has relation to heavenly things: What! could it possibly be, that what the ancients tell us in their fables of the sons of their gods, who wandered upon the earth, could it be that these fables had become really true? This question arises within him. He comes once more before Jesus, and asks, "Whence art thou," art thou a being from another world? He asks, full of amazement and anxiety, but to this question Jesus returns no answer. You are surprised at this, brethren, and it is perhaps natural that you should be. But you must not forget what had preceded. When Jesus had said to Pilate, "Thou sayest it, I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this end came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth"—that God-forsaken worldling had turned his back upon him, with the sneering exclamation, "What is truth?" Now observe, the man whose mind is so perverted and so debased that he doubts and despairs of truth—such a man receives from Jesus no answer. And then can it be that a man should turn his back upon a king, at the very moment when he is asserting his royal rights,

and yet go unpunished? No. And yet that is what Pilate did; yea, he did more than this, he turned his back upon the King of Truth at the very moment when he was asserting before him his kingly dignity! He who understood him not when he confessed himself to be the King of Truth, would he have understood him if he had revealed himself as the only-begotten from the Father's bosom? Who is there that thinks it likely? Thus Jesus was silent before Pilate on account of his utter insensibility.

Further, it is a time to be silent when gross falsehood testifies against itself in the conscience of the accusers; that is, in the case of men whose hearts are so irrecoverably hardened, that, though with ears to hear, they will not hear. Thus it was with the high-priest. "Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?" asks the dissembler, and he has all the while the answer in his own conscience. Shall we say that Jesus ought to have spoken then. No; for at that moment any word from without had been feebler than the word of conscience from within. Only give the malicious defamer a few moments of silence; do not you answer him, let him alone to listen to the voice of conscience. While you are silent, his conscience will speak more powerfully in your favour than any answer you could give him. There is preserved to us another instance of the silence of Jesus in similar circumstances, where you may clearly discover this. When Jesus said, with reference to the woman taken in adultery, of whom we read in the Gospel, "He that is without sin among you, let him first

cast a stone at her," he stooped down and wrote on the ground, and—*was silent*. How in these silent moments had conscience begun to carry on its work in the breast of those hypocritical accusers! "And they, being convicted of their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." See how powerfully conscience speaks when you are silent. Thus Jesus was silent before the high-priest on account of his hopeless hardness of heart.

And now, consider on what occasions Jesus spoke. He was silent before the high-priest, he spoke before his servant; he was silent before the insult of words, he spoke before him—how shall we say it?—who insulted him by deed, who struck him with the rod in his hand. Men are astonished at this, they cannot account for it; then, too, what Jesus does say appears to them far too little, just as if one would ward off a blow from a club with his little finger. But when these words are weighed more closely, how great does Jesus appear! Why did he speak here, and why did he speak so mildly? My answer is, It was because the man had committed the outrage with an erring conscience, and in his zeal for a consecrated office. "Answerest thou the high-priest so?" cried the man. Do you not see that it is not for a private affair of his own that this servant of the high-priest burns with zeal, but for a sacred office? Now, his speaking at all on this occasion, and his using language of such mildness, reveal in a very wonderful way the unper-turbed repose of the Lord, and at the same time his condescending grace. He is meek in the midst of

this, his own deepest degradation; for even in the outburst of a brutal passion, he recognizes the sacred spark of truth, respect for the authority appointed by God. Observe, also, how Jesus in his reply enters into the feelings of the man, lets himself down to his level, as it were. That man, who with erring conscience was so zealous for the cause of right, is the very one whom he tranquillizes by simply and nobly referring to the injustice of the action: "If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?" And thus, the reason why he, who was silent before king, governor, and high-priest, opened his mouth before the poor blinded servant of earthly justice, was because, even in his coarse mistreatment, the voice of an erring conscience spoke.

Again Jesus spoke, and was not silent, when the cause at stake did not concern his own private interests, but that of universal truth. He was not silent when the high-priest asked him, "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God?" neither was he silent when Pilate asked him, "Art thou a king then?" And the reason he was not silent on these occasions was, in order that *we* should know what we ought to answer questions of similar import. If Jesus had been silent then, could this congregation now open its mouth, and with joy confess, Yes, he is the Son of the living God, he is the King of Truth? He was not silent because he could then witness a confession which would be echoed back from a million of hearts, which thousands were to seal with their blood. On

account of this confession, Paul holds him up to our imitation, when, writing to Timothy, he says, "I give thee charge before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession." (1 Tim. vi. 13.) By that confession, with which Christ signed his own sentence of death, he has taught us that we too must confess, and that we must confess the truth, even if such a confession implies the sealing our own death-warrant. Jesus spoke on these occasions, because it was not his own interest, but the interest of the whole human race that was involved.

O that the Spirit of the holy God, which guided him when he was silent, which guided him when he spoke, would teach us all, according to his example, to speak and to keep silence as God will! And truly it is intelligible enough that, of the two tasks, that of being silent in accordance with the holy example of the Lord, will often appear to us the most difficult; for who is there that has not felt the power of passion which would break forth whenever the unrighteous, slanderous accusation has been made, or when we have to defend our cause in the presence of unjust judges? Now, I could refer you to that which, in many such cases, prudence would direct. And is not true piety at the same time the highest wisdom? Do we not see also here the truth of what the apostle says, that already in this life piety has the promise? O, in how many cases is silence in the presence of obtuseness and malice a greater act of prudence than the most eloquent discourse could be! But of that I will not speak; for here we preach higher motives

than the mere dictates of earthly prudence; here we preach the example of him, “who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed his cause to him that judgeth righteously.” (1 Peter ii. 23.)

Such is the holy pattern of the stainless Lamb of God. Whoever among you who loves him, whoever among you glows at the contemplation of that spotless Lamb, as he stands before his judges in the majesty of silence, O! let him learn to calm the passion of his breast, let him learn to pacify the rising of his anger when unjustly accused. I address myself to you, young men. You are proud that you can be angry in a righteous cause, and you are right; for he must be a weakling indeed, whose soul cannot be all on fire for the righteous cause. But on the other hand, that young man who, when the flame even of righteous anger is kindled, and would break forth from his breast, cannot then suppress it, in the view of the holy silence of Jesus, such an one will not at least dare to call himself a disciple of Jesus. Your righteous anger is good; and yet—if at any time you lose command over it, or, if you are not strong enough to say at the proper time to the storm of your breast, “Be still! in the name of Jesus, be still!”—it is nothing more than the lurid flame of natural passion after all. It may be difficult for you to keep silence when falsely accused, as Jesus did. But, believe me, it is far from easy to speak, when falsely accused, *as Jesus spoke*. I doubt if there is so much as one here present, who, at the moment

when the servant of justice dared to lay a violent hand upon the Son of God—who at that very moment, I say, would have been capable of thinking of the erring conscience of that man, of recognizing in the fire of the coarsest passion the spark of divine light that still burned there—that is, his respect for the existing authorities—and who could with meekness have corrected his error. See also what a testimony there is in these words of Christ to the regard he paid to the authorities which were appointed by God. Your passion boils if you receive a single wrong, and that, it may be, merely an apparent wrong; while Jesus remains meek and mild even under the grossest misusage, because he respects the reverence for God-appointed order, even when shown in conjunction with the blindest zeal. Could there be a more powerful appeal in favour of the reverence which the disciples of Christ owe to that authority, which is appointed as his representative on earth. See, then, how hard it is, in the face of unrighteous accusation, to *speak* like Jesus!

O, all of you who feel this, fold your hands, and let us pray: O Father of mercies! forgive thy children, who cannot, even in an unrighteous cause, suppress the passion of their breast! O Father, thou hast surely promised to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him of thee—we pray thee for thy Holy Spirit—help thy weak disciples—grant unto them thy Holy Spirit, that they may have command over their passion. O thou Saviour, who art meek and lowly in heart, let thine example shine before us and in us, in

order that we may learn to be silent and to speak like thee. Amen!

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## SERMON IV.

### THE OATH OF JESUS.

MATTHEW xxvi. 63, 64.—But Jesus held his peace. And the high-priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

LET us take up our subject, beloved, where we left off in our last meditation. Jesus stands before his unrighteous judges. The false accusers have given their testimony. “Answerest thou nothing?” asks the high-priest of him. “What is it which these witness against thee?” But Jesus was silent. What this sublime silence was intended to teach the high-priest, what it was intended to teach us, we have already considered and laid to heart. To-day will, I trust, be made clear to you, what is implied in those words of Jesus, when he at length breaks silence, and, in reply to the summons of the high-priest, begins to speak. You will find the words of our text in Matthew xxvi. 63, 64: *“And the high-priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us, whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said:*

*nevertheless, I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."*

Thus then Jesus breaks the silence he had kept, for he speaks not on his own account, but for mankind; he does not make a statement merely, no, Jesus makes an oath, Jesus swears by the living God. As in our courts, the judge administers the oath, so does the high-priest here, and by a solemn Amen, the accused makes that oath his own. This Amen, Jesus utters here in the words, "Thou sayest." This lets us see in what sense we are to understand that command of Christ, "I say unto you, Swear not at all." (Matthew v. 34.) The oaths of which he speaks cannot surely be those which are taken in courts of justice ordained by God, in holy reverence, as before the great, unseen Avenger. Such oaths, brethren, are themselves a service rendered to God. Know you not what is written in the Scriptures, that "when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself." (Hebrews vi. 13.) No; it is not those oaths which belong to the service of God that Christ forbids, but only those which proceed from forgetfulness of God; the oaths which Christ reproves, are not those which the heart swears, but only such oaths as the tongue utters, and with which the heart has nothing to do. It is *your* oaths and asseverations of which he speaks, ye God-forgetting tongues, from which you allow the greatest of all names to pass, without thinking in the most remote degree that you are speaking of him who fashioned

that tongue within your mouth, and gave you the breath which is within your breast! When Jesus utters an oath, he utters it in the service of God; and if it could be said that there were ever moments in his life when his soul was less near to God than at other times—certain it is that at this moment he was very near him. A feeling of peculiar solemnity seizes us, when we see a man preparing to offer an oath, we then experience somewhat of the presence of God. How much more powerfully must we feel this holy frame of mind, when Jesus is himself about to swear by the living God!

It was not for himself that the Lord delivered this testimony and confirmed it by an oath. What did *he* gain by this testimony? For him it was the signing of his own death-warrant. No. It was for mankind that he testified—for *us* he testified. His words are intended to prove: *a stay for the doubter, a terror to the adversary, a strong consolation for his followers,* both then and at all times.'

It was a *stay for the doubter*; and first, for those of that time. You are aware, that at that time political and religious hopes were mixed up together in the minds of the Jewish people; that the nation very confidently expected that their Messiah was to be a king, who, endowed with the seven spirits of the Lord, was to prepare for himself a holy people; but who, at the same time, was to smite with armed hand the rod of Romish supremacy to the ground, and to raise the fallen sceptre of Israel. Jesus, however, had declared, "My kingdom is not of this world."

Observe with what earnestness he seeks to prevent the mingling of the flame of earthly ardour with heavenly zeal—of their political with their religious hopes. And does not this teach us something, in these times in which we live? Does it not call our attention to the danger which threatens the religious communities of our time, and, among others, that Evangelical Union of Germany, in itself so hopeful —our Gustavus-Adolphus Society—which, at its commencement, I addressed in this city and from this place. What a fatal danger would threaten that Union, were tendencies to find their way into it, which have for their end something else than the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, and the alleviation of the need of the brethren in the faith! See with what care the Saviour guarded against permitting the earthly flame to be kindled side by side with the heavenly. He rejoiced when, in the narrower circle of his disciples, he heard the confession of his divine Sonship sound from the depths of the soul of Peter. He unveiled himself in his divine dignity to such simple natures as the woman at the well, and the man born blind. But in the presence of the whole of the people he was silent on the subject, and, even on the occasion of his entry into Jerusalem, it was only by his actions that he gave expression to the fact, that he was entering Zion as Zion's King. He would ever be found only by those who sought him, would open only to those who knocked. Thus, we may believe, there were many among those people upon whom the ray of his light had fallen only from afar, who were

still inquirers and doubters. They knew that he was a Master come from God, as Nicodemus said; what they were in doubt about was, what he may have been more than this. They knew that when he opened the mouth he could not utter falsehood, but to them he had not yet made himself known. Now he reveals himself, confirming with an oath in the name of the living God what he declares—"I am he to whom the whole of the preceding history of Israel has pointed for thousands of years. I am he whom the mouth of the prophets has foretold as the Desire of Israel, as the Consolation of the Heathen; I am Christ, the Son of God." O! what an anchor was that for doubting souls to make fast to! Nicodemus, for instance, what must *he* not have felt at the word, how must his heart have rejoiced! When, afterwards, they lifted up on the cross the King of Israel to whom his soul had rendered its homage—when, surrounded with malefactors on the right and on the left, he breathed out his pure life—the waves of doubt may have at that moment closed over his head; but perchance, even at that moment, his soul may have seized hold of the anchor which the words of our text held out to him! "Nevertheless," he may have exclaimed, "nevertheless my Jesus has sworn that it is he that is the anchor of my hope, and it reaches far beyond the cross, and beyond the grave!"

Thus the doubters found strength and support in this word of Jesus. And tell me, ye doubters of this present time, ye who are still, even in this very hour, inquiring, "Who was Christ?" even after eighteen

centuries have answered the question—if the history of these centuries, if the simple word of Jesus has not satisfied you—say, do ye not, at least in that oath of Jesus, which he sware by the living God, recognize who he is, and find in that oath an anchor for your doubting souls? Say, do you not feel at least that thus much is certain: Were it even possible that the word of falsehood could have passed from those holy lips, surely in *such* a moment that was impossible! In whatever stage we may be of our Christian life, whether we are children in the faith, or men—whether we have a soul like Thomas, or like Peter, Nicodemus, or John—still we all feel alike, and with the greatest certainty, that in the moment when Jesus uttered these words of our text, he spoke the truth. Now if it is incontestably certain that it was the truth which Jesus then spoke, how can you go on asking, Who was Christ? just as if he had then given no answer at all to the question of the high-priest. “An oath of confirmation is an end of all strife,” is the language of Scripture. What! and when Christ affirms with an oath who he is, shall the controversy about Jesus not yet be ended? O no, my Jesus! for me it is enough, if thou dost only speak, my soul bows before thy word—how much more when thou addest the confirmation of an oath by the living God! In so far as I am concerned, thy simple word has—God be praised!—made an end of all strife. And even if history had been silent, if thy grave had never opened its voice, I should still with Nicodemus hold by the anchor of thy word—now I know who thou art. Thou

hast declared that thou art the promised One. Thus know I, by thine oath, that thou art the seed of the woman which should bruise the head of the serpent; thou art the seed of Abraham in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed; thou art the Shiloh unto whom the gathering of the people should be; thou art the Prince of peace, of the tribe of David, of whose peace there is no end. This I know, for thou hast sworn it by the living God!

The answer of our Lord is a stay for the doubter, but it is equally a *terror to the adversary* in those and in all times. Listen to the first awful words with which the accused summons his judges before the bar of his tribunal: "From henceforth shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." We understand less what these words implied than they, to whom they were addressed, did. At the hearing of those words, ancient, sacred recollections would come into their memory; they would recognize the reference to the prophetic word. Let us put ourselves in the place of Caiaphas and his fellow-councillors, and see what they must have thought and felt on hearing words like these. "I saw," thus writes the prophet Daniel, "in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his king-

dom that which shall not be destroyed. I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me." (Dan. vii. 13, 14.) This word of prophecy came up before their soul. The "*Son of Man*"—do you remember how often the Lord makes use of this mysterious designation, in speaking of himself? He had referred to this word of prophecy in that expression;—he had directed those who would inquire more deeply than others to the fact, that he who had appeared in the flesh was he who claimed as his due the seat on the right hand of power. And how before Caiaphas he gives this idea clear and decided expression. As if he had said, "The time, during which ye have seen me in my humiliation as the Son of man, is now past, another scene is about to open, in which you shall see me only at the right hand of power, and from which you see me descend only on the clouds of heaven." The firmness and calm sublimity which the Saviour showed in giving this witness of himself, cannot have been altogether without effect on the minds of those present. However hardened we may think the hearts of the members of that council to have been, we cannot doubt that as he uttered these words, a thrill of emotion passed through the soul of many there, and that only in a low and trembling voice one and another would speak of them to his neighbour. "The man can have been no fanatic," we may imagine them to have said, "who, with so calm, self-conscious a repose, summons us here before the bar of God." And if they said it not—the time was at hand when they

were with their own eyes to see that this Jesus sat on the right hand of power. The judgment upon Israel, *that* was the proof that he had attained his kingly dignity: he had referred to this, when he stood on the Mount of Olives, and looked down upon the city with tears; he referred to it when he went for the last time out of the temple with the words, “Your house is left unto you desolate. Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, ‘Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord;’” he had referred to it even when, fainting beneath the burden of his own crucifixion-sorrows, he said, “Behold, the days are coming in the which they shall begin to say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us, and to the hills, Cover us.’”

When the flames seized the temple of God, when the holy place of Jerusalem fell in smoking ruins, they must have been able to see, and deeply apprehend, the truth, that that very Jesus whom they had condemned had sat down at the right hand of God, and from that time forward would descend only upon the clouds of heaven. The historian Eusebius relates, that thousands of Israelites became believers, when, in the judgments on Jerusalem, they were compelled to own the avenging hand of their despised Redeemer, and the fulfilment of his prophecies. And thus the answer of Jesus in the presence of his judges became truly then a terror to his adversaries.

These words of Christ are, moreover, well fitted to strike terror into his adversaries in all times. My Christian hearers, can it be that Christ who spoke no untruth, when he said before the high-priest, that he

was the Son of God become man, and confirmed the declaration by an oath, uttered falsehood when he added, that, to him who had descended into such a depth of humiliation, the place on the right hand of power was, from that time forward, assigned, and that into his hands all power in heaven and earth was given? And if that word was truth, then consider, O ye adversaries! against whom ye are opposing yourselves. It is not against the child of man that has passed away, it is against a present, living Lord, who now shares in his majesty the throne of Omnipotence with the everlasting God, and into whose power, along with the heaven and the earth, *ye* too are given over, for your salvation or your endless perdition. It was a lamb that *ye* slew. A lion, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, will come forth in battle against you. Have you not heard the divine salutation with which the father receives his Son, when he came from the cross and the grave to sit down upon his throne: "Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." He must sit on the right hand of the Father, until the Father had himself made his enemies his footstool. With the day of Pentecost his campaign in the world began, and it has been carried on ever since. And what were his troops? They were twelve humble Jews, unfurnished with any other weapon, whether of assault or of defence, but the preaching of one who had been crucified; and on the other side, in hostile array against those twelve, the whole world was ranged. How unequal does the conflict appear! Ye twelve men of Judea, *ye* would go forth

to conquer the world. How irrational the idea, how vain the result must prove! But you who say so are not looking beyond the men who are combating upon earth. Why, see you not that strong arm from heaven which is fighting with those weaklings upon earth?

Listen to that ancient war-song of the militant Church of Christ: "With human might is nothing done; and trusting in ourselves, we soon should fall." Behold how, one after another, the enemies of Christ have been compelled to lie in the dust before the little troop of his warriors! Judgment began with the hardened inhabitants of the land of Judea. It was judged. Since the temple fell, never to rise again, Israel ceased to have its ancient religion, for it had no longer any king, any priest, any sacrifice. Is there not inscribed upon the smoking ruins of Jerusalem the words, "Be not deceived, God is not mocked"? And since that time how many enemies, both without the Church and within it, have been compelled to become the footstool of his throne! Tell me, you who are read in the history of nations, was it in any way to be expected, according to what usually happens among men, that that colossus of the Roman Empire, which then encompassed the world, should be subdued by mere words, by the mere preaching of that small band of Jews? And what was the theme of the preaching which produced such mighty results? It was a man that had been crucified in Judea, whose ignominy and shame had been manifest before the whole world, but whose resurrection-glory only a few faithful friends

had witnessed. Was it likely, according to what is wont to happen among men, that the emblem of shame, the cross, would one day shine on a monarch's brow, would one day glitter as a mark of honour on a hero's breast; that it would rise, a touching memorial, in woods and in fields; and that, above all the cities of Europe, it would, from its high elevation, signalize to the distant traveller, as a sign, that there too men were wont to bow the knee in the name of the Crucified? "It is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our eyes. The stone which the builders rejected, has become the corner-stone."

That which is a terror to the adversaries, is also a source of *consolation to his followers*. And, indeed, is it not even so? Thus, this word of the Lord was a word of consolation *then* to those who believed on him. No doubt, when the sad reality rose up in overwhelming power before them, the comfort that these words conveyed was shut out from their eyes, along with so many other words of comfort. But, after the reality, so full of pain, had been succeeded by another reality, equally full of joy, when, at the feast of Pentecost, they witnessed the first manifestation of their glorified Lord, they again recalled all the words of comfort which they had forgotten—they would then understand the import of *this* word too, for they could refer for its elucidation to his acts, which proved so wondrously that the Son of Man was indeed sitting on the right hand of power. "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed

forth this, which ye now see and hear." This is the exclamation of Peter, when the tongues of fire began to burn upon their heads, and the tongues of their mouth to speak in the new languages which the Spirit taught. And now they know him henceforth only as he who sitteth at the right hand of power; sustained by his arm, they now go forth courageously into the conflict, courageously to death. Stephen, the first martyr, sees, as the earth closes to him, the heavens open, and, full of the Holy Ghost, exclaims, "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing upon the right hand of God." And thus had the word which the Lord spoke before the high-priest become, to their consolation, revived and renewed in their hearts.

And that open heaven which Stephen saw, is open, my brethren, now and for evermore, above His fighting Church. "Crucified in weakness, Christ liveth in the power of God;" this, as Paul saith, is the consolation of his disciples in all times, and also in this. This is their consolation in the conflicts of their Church; it is also their consolation in the combats of their own hearts. Christians of the Evangelical Church! we too have seen him in very recent years, coming to us from the right hand of power, and on the clouds of heaven. Are not the times of resurrection in his Church—is not the fact that, as often as his enemies have thought that they had succeeded in entombing her, the stone has ever been rolled away from the grave, as by an unseen hand, and the Lord has gone forth glorified—is not this a proof that he who was

crucified in weakness, lives and reigns in power at the right hand of the Father? It was with this feeling that the Christianity of Germany was penetrated, when, in the days of the Reformation, the garden of God shot forth and bloomed all around in the fair flowers of the Christian graces; when a fresh young branch grew upon the old tree of Christianity, and flourished and became green, at the very time in which the old trunk appeared to be devoted to destruction. Then one exclaimed with joy, "Behold, he sitteth on the right hand of power, and comes on the clouds of heaven!" And may not we repeat the cry now, in these days; we who, in spite of all that we must lament and bewail, are nevertheless in truth celebrating now a new spring time in the Evangelical Church, as both within his Church, and without, among the heathen, one victory after another is gained by the Captain of Salvation? Is it not a marvellous thing in our eyes, that the stone which the builders rejected, which the servants of the Church themselves would, in their short-sightedness, have made use of merely to fill up some aperture in the building, is become once more the head of the corner. The members of the Church are, once more, become living stones in the temple of God, and exclaim with new tongues, "He that was crucified in weakness, he it is who liveth and reigneth in power on the right hand of God!" Let the Church evermore carry on her attacks against the two hostile camps, which, still in our days, hold the field in opposition to her; the one foe is the army of the unbelieving, who would raze her fair foundations; and the other is the

Church of Rome, which seeks to build on that precious foundation, wood, straw, stubble. We fear you not! You are, indeed, no other than our ancient enemies! In how many conflicts has He already defeated you! Take comfort, thou little flock, the word of the oath stands sure, above all strife, above all doubt: "From this time forth, shall ye see the Son of Man, sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."

Comfort, little flock, amid the conflicts of your own *heart!* For you, too, the word of the oath stands sure above all doubt, and above all strife. Take consolation from the thought, that not *alone* have we to maintain the conflict, not *alone* have we to fight our battles. Are not our enemies, at the same time, the enemies of our Lord? And did not he, when he ascended from the cross, sit down at the right hand of power, that he might make all his enemies his footstool. When we think of ourselves, we are disengaged, but we become bold and brave when we think of him; when we think of ourselves we succumb, but we conquer when we think of him. Therefore, once more, courage, you little flock, courage also amid your own battles. Only look, and, if you have the eye of faith, as Stephen had, you will see him standing, at the right hand of power, ready to fight with us and for us. Have but the eye of faith, as Peter had, when he owned, at the feast of Pentecost, that he who is at the right hand of God is that same Lord who makes ready for his people a Pentecostal feast. He is still standing there, he is standing at the right hand

of power, and gives his Spirit, gives Pentecostal blessings, to all who ask them. O believe it only! and your faith will also this day prove itself the victory that overcometh the world. Know you not the weapons with which, in every age, believers have gained their victories? Faith, prayer, and tears—such are the weapons with which, at all times, the Church has conquered. Let us lay hold of, let us wield these weapons; and, amid the conflicts of our own spirit, and of the Church, in order that we may thus impart courage to our heart, and nerve to our arm, let us sing that war-song of the Church of Christ:

With force of arms we nothing can,  
Full soon were we down-ridden,  
But for us fights the proper Man  
Whom God himself hath bidden.  
Ask we, Who is this same?  
Christ Jesus is his name;  
The Lord Zebaoth's Son:  
He and no other one  
Shall conquer in the battle.      Amen.

## SERMON V.

THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS: "MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD."

JOHN xviii. 33-36.—Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.

LET us betake ourselves once more in thought to that night which preceded the day of the death of the Redeemer. The stony heart of Caiaphas is unmoved by the solemn asseveration of Jesus;—it continues unimpressed, even when the accused serves him with that solemn citation before the bar of God. Midnight is past, the morning dawns, and we now see Jesus brought before the judgment-seat of Pilate, with the priests for his accusers. In those days the sentence of death, which the spiritual ruler in Israel had passed, in order to be valid, required to receive the seal of the secular authority; hence it is that the priests appear with their victim before the governor. The high-priest, however, knows well the man with whom he has to deal. Evil-doers are the most acute to recognize evil in others. He knows the weak point in the equity of the Roman governor; he knows that he is much more likely to fear the god who has established his throne in Rome than the God of heaven.

Hence the accusation they bring before him is not a religious but a political one: "He says that he is a king, he would establish a kingdom." The admission concerning his kingdom which Jesus made before the procurator shall furnish the subject of our present discourse. We read in John xviii. 33-36: "*Then Pilate entered into the judgment-hall again, and called Jesus, and said unto him, Art thou the King of the Jews? Jesus answered him, Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me? Pilate answered, Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me. What hast thou done? Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence.*"

Art thou the King of the Jews? asks the governor, certainly not without a feeling of contempt for the nation he despised, at the thought that *such an one* could presume to call himself its king. Jesus replies with the simple earnestness of truth, "Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?" Hast thou seen in me anything to lead thee to form the conclusion, or hast thou not rather in thine own conscience a witness to the malice of the accusation? Pilate, irritated by the very demand, implying, as it seemed to do, that he paid any attention to the affairs of the Jews, exclaimed, "Am I a Jew;"—that I should trouble myself with such concerns as these? And now follows the declaration which Jesus made

before Pilate concerning his kingdom. In it he makes an *affirmation*, he affirms that he has a kingdom, and that he has servants; but he also makes a *denial*—“My kingdom is *not* of this world.”

Let us consider more closely what Christ has in these words *denied* concerning the nature of his kingdom. “*My kingdom is not of this world,*” he says: “*Now is my kingdom not from hence,*” that is to say, it is not a kingdom like those of this world, neither has it arisen from hence. How then has he attained to his sovereignty? Not certainly in the way in which the kingdoms of this world come into the possession of the powerful. And how is it that the kingdoms of this world are acquired? It must be either by inheritance or by conquest. But Christ, although born a king, did not receive his kingdom by inheritance. Upon the throne of his sovereignty he was preceded by none. It is a throne upon which before him none ever sat, neither shall any after him sit thereon. As little did he obtain his kingdom by acquisition. He was called to his throne by no human authority, by no convention of the nation, his crown came immediately from God. No tumult of battle was heard, when *His* empire was founded; no blood flowed around his throne—saving only his own. This he could substantiate by clear proofs. Worldly kingdoms must be maintained as they are won, and so he says, “If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews.” But he, when he was about to be delivered, bade Peter put his sword into its scab-

bard, and the last act of those hands before they were bound—hands ever wont to distribute blessings—was a work of mercy and of peace, in healing that slight wound, the only one ever inflicted for his sake. He touched the ear of the servant of the high-priest, and healed him. As the kingdom of Christ had not been established by the power of the flesh, neither was it so to be maintained. This is a truth which flesh and blood are slow indeed to apprehend, as is evident from the fact that it is so readily forgotten. How often do we require that the Lord should repeat the command to us, Put up thy sword into its scabbard! How easily does the opinion find its way into the Church of God, that the great and powerful of the earth must, after all, be a stronger and surer stay than the faith of the congregation! How hard does each one of us find it to learn that fundamental law of the kingdom of God, that it is only he that humbleth himself that shall be exalted. "*For the meek shall inherit the earth.*"

How then, I ask again, has Christ attained to his sovereignty, seeing that he has gained it neither by inheritance nor by conquest. O! it was in a way the most unlike what worldly men would dream of, a way which no man can understand, excepting him to whom it has been taught by the Spirit of God. "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister. And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant. Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." What a strange,

unheard-of way is this to a throne and a crown! Other men who would hold a sceptre would come in power, he came in weakness; others would substantiate their claim to authority, he laid his aside.

But has not Christ himself founded his kingdom in this very way? And does not every soul who belongs to him know in his experience, that by nothing has Christ taken so strong a hold upon his heart as by his ministering love? How has he put our flesh and blood more deeply to shame than by his ministering love? And how are the strong ones fallen a prey into his hands? How but by his ministering love?

Here is One, whose power unknown  
Conquers not with sword or bow;  
Million strong ones overthrown,  
Lie in dust before Him low.  
The banner which aloft he bears,  
The sign of bloodless victory wears.

A gentle Lamb such triumphs gains,— •  
A Lamb with sorrow riven;  
His weapons are his woes and pains,  
To these is conquest given;  
His foes the might of mercy prove,  
And melt beneath the warmth of love.

Now as the king of this kingdom is, so should also his servants be. In the way by which he won his rights as king, must we gain our rights as his subjects. With carnal weapons no man can conquer for himself a right to the privileges of that kingdom; nor can any acquire them by inheritance. No: that kingdom comes not by inheritance. “Not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man.” Ye pious

parents, well do you know this, for you would rather leave as a legacy to your children that faith which maketh blessed, than any earthly possession. Would you not, were it only possible, rather leave all that you have to others, if you could but bequeath to your children the inestimable boon of a saving faith. But it is impossible; this blessing must be personally gained, every one must acquire it for himself. Every child of Adam has to fight the battle for himself anew. It is only such tangible things as can be made over by one man to another, that can be obtained by inheritance. That which constitutes the most true and real possession of a man, which is peculiarly his own, like the boon of a living faith, must be won by every one for himself by stern, internal conflict. It is true in temporal things, that wealthy parents have wealthy children: but in spiritual things, it is, alas! too often the reverse. A parent may be rich in grace whose children are poor and portionless; or there may be children rich towards God, with parents having nothing, standing in need of all things! Ye must not grieve, ye parents, at the thought that you cannot transfer to your children that best of all possessions, for, only consider, is not the fact that you can bequeath your other possessions, a proof that those things which can pass from one to another are not in themselves a true and *abiding* portion? All those blessings which you can leave to your heirs are perishable blessings; but that blessing which every one of your children must "take by force," is an imperishable one.

Then again, no man can with carnal weapons con-

quer for himself the kingdom of God. It is true, in all other things, that in proportion as a man has wealth and power, strength of body, and force of character, does the world and all it contains, lie at his feet. Everything is in his power, everything may become his—saving one, and that is the kingdom of God. In that kingdom, very different laws come into operation. The poor have the gospel preached to them, that they may be satisfied, while the rich must suffer want. He putteth down the mighty from their seats, and exalteth them of low degree. Men are overthrown—and little children receive the kingdom. How many of the first shall be last, and of the last, first? And will Christ administer his government in the time to come in another way, according to other laws, than he does now? Here he was not surrounded by the powerful and the wise, according to the flesh, but by what men would call the foolish and weak of this world. He will keep the word which he hath spoken: he will confess none before his heavenly Father, but those who have confessed him, with word and heart, before men. Here we may go even further. So far from its being the case, that reputation and riches, beauty and talents, by which everything else may be acquired, make the entrance to the kingdom of God more easy, these things rather make it more difficult. “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!” Such is the sad exclamation of our Saviour: and in these words it is not those that are rich in worldly riches alone, that he means, but all the rich, whether their wealth consist in gold

and silver, or in honours, or in talents. For the richer a man is, the more is he disposed to be self-satisfied, and the more difficult is it for him to practice self-denial. "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life," says our Lord. And it is just because the gate is so strait and the way so narrow, that all the riches a man brings with him must be left outside. Whoever would be great and mighty in the kingdom of God, will find that *there* power and greatness are measured in a very different standard. The kingdom of God can be conquered by us only in that most spiritual of all ways in which the Saviour took possession of it. Every kingdom is as one body; and in every member of the same body the same spirit must breathe. The head is the centre of its life; but the life of the head goes through all the members. Now, whoever has been taught by the great Archetype of ministering love, by Him who is our Head, the great lesson, that we are, all of us, here in the world not to let ourselves be ministered unto, but to minister, becomes a member of that kingdom. Let them carry on the vain emulation—those men who know nothing of this kingdom, and who seek only to excel in rank, property, and talents—let them carry on their vain emulation! but to us, O beloved in Christ! is another rivalry appointed—the rivalry of excelling in deeds of ministering love! If, then, this is the way by which alone the kingdom of the Lord can be gained, O! how many of the first shall be last, O! how many of the last shall be first!

Thus it was that our Lord won the kingdom, and

thus have his disciples also achieved its conquest. In this sense we read, "My kingdom is not from hence." Now a kingdom, which is so unlike all worldly kingdoms in its *origin*, must also be very unlike them in its *nature*. A sovereignty which takes its rise in a way so gentle and so spiritual, will also be exercised in a spiritual and unseen way. His kingdom is a sway over spirits, which are related to him by the bond of love. Among the members of this kingdom the workings of love—of love towards Him and among one another—are indeed manifest; for love is a power, and every power must manifest itself in action. Such a kingdom presents an appearance very different from that of the kingdoms of the world. We see this in every Christian congregation that is penetrated by the Spirit of the Lord, and we should see it throughout the whole Christian Church, were it not so imbued with the spirit of the world. In the kingdoms of the world, it is law that rules; in the kingdom of Christ, it is only the impulse and power of love. The kingdoms of the world mind the things of the world, the kingdom of Christ minds the things of God. In the kingdoms of the world, there is ever between the ruling power and the subjects he governs a great gulf fixed. But how strangely different is it, in this respect, in the kingdom of God! There the king rules only that he may make kings of all his subjects. For Christ will retain nothing for himself of all the blessedness and might, of all the holiness and wisdom that the Father has given him, but he will share it all with his subjects. "To him that overcometh," thus

he speaks, “will I grant to sit with me on my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father on his throne.” May we not say in a certain sense, that the incarnation of the Son of God is constantly carried forward in the Church, which is his body, until all come, as the apostle Paul says, “to the fulness of the stature of perfect men in Christ?” Is not his body “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all?”

Let us now see what, in these words, he *affirms*. He does not contradict the assertion that he has a kingdom; nay, he speaks of his kingdom and of his servants. If we are to affirm anything with regard to the kingdom of Christ, we must not content ourselves with merely saying, that the kingdom of Christ is *not of this world*; we must add that, although his kingdom is not *of* this world, yet it is nevertheless *in* this world, and will advance more and more in this world. Yes, God be praised! we can say with joy, that although the Lord’s kingdom is not of this world, still it is in this world, and, so long as the world exists, it will never pass away from it. Even before the highest sacrifice of ministering love had been offered, he had won for himself, by means of that ministering love, a kingdom whose subjects were all united in the common testimony, “*To whom can we go but unto thee!*” Happy is that king whose happy subjects exclaim, “To whom can we go but unto thee,” and who know of no other rule under which their lot could be so blessed! At first the members of that kingdom were not numerous; after the Ascension, there were a

hundred and twenty gathered in; add to these the five hundred believers in Galilee, and even then the number does not make up a thousand. But the day of Pentecost was a harvest-day. On that one day three thousand were added to the Church. All of these, indeed, cannot have been true and real members of the kingdom; for, indeed, even among the twelve there was a Judas, and among the brethren in Jerusalem, an Ananias.

The kingdom of heaven was, as the Saviour had said, as a net that was cast into the sea, in which there were caught all manner of fish, good and bad together. That net is the Church. Not until that net is full will it be drawn to the shore, and then the selection between the good and bad fish will be made. Thus is it also with the kingdom of God in the Church. It may well happen, that at one time there are many more bad fish in the net than good ones; but it can never be that at any time there is not so much as a single good fish there. For the Church of Christ is the body of Christ; but a body, all the members of which are bad, is fallen a prey to corruption and death, and could no more be made alive. If you cast your eyes on the page of history, you will see how, at the very time when matters have looked worst in the Church of Christ, and it almost seemed as if all its members were dead, times of reviving have returned, when, from the members which were still healthy, a new life has broken out which has made the sick ones whole again, and even those which were dead again to live. And thus times may come, in which the king-

dom of God in the church of a city, a country, or perhaps even throughout the universal Church, is a kingdom invisible to the eyes of men; but all the more in such times will the members there which still live, manifest the life they have, should their only symptom of vitality be their antagonism against those members which are dead. Yes, the kingdom of God is *in* the world. It is a community of men who have received the forgiveness of their sins, and in whom in all their weakness the love of God is still the ruling principle of their life, heart, and mind. Such a kingdom of God exists, were you only aware of it, exists in our Fatherland, in this city. *You* must, as many of you as are living members, be aware of this, and you must also be ready to engage in conflict against those members of the body which are diseased and dead.

Then again, one cannot own that the kingdom of God is in this world, without at the same time acknowledging that his kingdom is advancing in the world. Our Lord came into the world with the full consciousness—to which moreover he has given repeated expression—that he planted his kingdom here only as a grain of corn. We have a pledge and assurance of the fact, that this kingdom of God is no mere idea of man, but an eternal thought of God. Witness the sure prophetic glance with which he looked away from the small beginning to the wide course of history, and the future perfecting of his kingdom. He taught his disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom *come!*” He gave them to understand that the kingdom of God is as a grain of mustard-seed or as a little leaven. “Verily

I say unto you, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power.” The kingdom of God increased and extended itself, spread out its branches all around, and evermore shelterless birds have found refuge amid its branches. The kingdom of God has grown and taken deeper root; the leaven has more and more permeated the measure of meal, and has leavened it all. Christ has arisen upon humanity like a sun, of which men have been able to make only this or that separate ray their own. But Christendom was ever becoming more and more capable of receiving all his rays. At first all Christians were missionaries—all strove and laboured in order that the leaven should leaven the whole lump. It was only by degrees that, setting out from the heart, it became diffused over every province of life. By and by some of the leavening influence had extended itself into the domain of *science*. In how many fair blossoms on the tree of Science can we trace the development of the principle of the Christian life! And since that period, how has knowledge extended its investigations to the internal, to the moral world of mind! There are to be found, in the simple sayings of the New Testament, thoughts, such as, when they have once been heard, men can never forget. And even many of those men in our time, who would aim a parricidal blow at the Church, and would seek to rid themselves of the Lord Jesus Christ altogether, think and act under the power of these very utterances. Then again, some of the leaven has penetrated into the department of *art*.

When did the inner world of man ever find such an external expression in art, as it has since the time when the sacred history of the Gospel became the inexhaustible subject for the song of the poet, for the pencil of the artist? How much has humanity gained—what advantages also have been reaped by art from the fact, that the figure of Christ the crucified has been placed before it; in that pattern of majesty in the form of a servant, the opposing lineaments of which combine to form so grand a whole! Again, somewhat of the leaven has found its way into the State. Since our States have attained the consciousness that the work which God has given them to do, is not merely to watch over the external weal and woe of men, but far more than this, to care for their education in Christian morality; since they have become solicitous for the education and cultivation of their children, for the restoration of the fallen, for the succour of the poor, the blind, the deaf and dumb; in so far as in the choice of their officers, they do not inquire merely into the ability, but also into the morality of the man: in these and many other things, we must joyfully own that the leaven of Christianity has, to some extent, penetrated into the State also. Thus far, then, is the kingdom of God already come, and thus will it ever advance more and more. The truth hath many degenerate children who seek to make her their slave; but, on the other hand, she will to all time have obedient children, who hearken to her voice, and allow themselves to be trained by her. The heart of man is made for Christ, and can find no

rest anywhere, but only in him; and therefore it is absolutely impossible that Jesus our King should at any time have no subjects upon earth. He has had them, he has them in the world now, he will have them to eternity.

O Christians, there is no blessing more worthy of our labours and strong endeavour than the kingdom of God. “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you.” O why do you give yourselves so much care and trouble, ye Martha-souls, and seek not after that which Christ calls the first object of human striving! No man can serve two masters. You must absolutely come to a decision, as to which of all blessings is the highest! Do you know and believe assuredly, all of you who are assembled here, that you are really subjects of Christ and members of his kingdom? O then, tell me, do you, as often as we make together the confession of our faith, “I believe in one holy catholic Church, and in one communion of saints,” do you experience then the comfort that lies in being able silently to add, in the fulness of thankful faith, “of which Church I too am, by the grace of God, a member—of which saints and holy men I too am one?” May that spiritual sun, from which light and life stream into the heart of man, come forth, in order that his beams may fall upon you! He is there, that king who did not come into the world to be ministered unto, but to minister; he is there, and will win your hearts, that you may learn from him how man may obtain that greatness before

which all other glory, all the glory of reputation, of gifts, and talents, becomes dim—the greatness which lies in ministering love. He who would be great in the kingdom of God, let him be the servant of all!

Here is One whose power unknown  
 Conquers not with sword or bow,  
 Million strong ones overthrown  
 Lie in dust before him low:  
 The banner which aloft he bears  
 The sign of bloodless victory wears.  
 A gentle Lamb, these triumphs gain,  
 A Lamb with sorrow riven;  
 His weapons are his woes and pains,  
 To these is conquest given;  
 His foes the might of mercy prove,  
 And melt beneath the warmth of love.

Let us overcome with Jesus, in order that with him we may receive the crown of everlasting glory. Amen.



## SERMON VI.

### THE CONFESSTION OF JESUS: "I AM A KING."

JOHN xviii. 37.—Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

WE have sought to edify each other by the contemplation of a number of passages taken from that portion of our Lord's history in which, through the night of his sufferings, the light of his glory in the most

wondrous way is seen to break. The devout of the Church of Rome celebrate the road to the cross in a way which brings it more sensibly before their eyes. They divide it into twelve stages, to each of which they assign a particular niche, and at every separate place, as for instance when our beloved Saviour was in an agony in the garden, where he was scourged, where he was mocked, and so on through other afflictions he endured, they fall down upon their knees and worship him. We, too, have commenced a similar progress through the different stages of his sufferings: we have followed him from Gethsemane, and have listened to the words which fell from his gracious lips. And now we stand at the entry of Pilate's porch, where, possibly, John may have stood, and heard his Saviour speak. Here we hear the word which was afterwards to draw from Paul an admiring approval, when, in his Epistle to Timothy, he speaks of the good confession which Jesus Christ witnessed before Pontius Pilate. (1 Timothy vi. 13.) Endeavour to understand this day that noble testimony of our Lord. After the words, "My kingdom is not of this world," we read, John xviii. 37: "*Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.*"

Certainly it is a noble testimony! In order rightly to penetrate its significance, let us view, first, the

*majesty* of this King, then the *justice* of his claim, and, lastly, his *subjects*.

First, then, his *majesty*. Jesus has uttered many sayings of himself, with regard to which one requires a strong faith not to permit one's self to be led into error concerning him. But *here* that is not the case. At all events, when a man, who was subjected to such ignominy and shame, called himself the King of truth, even Pilate himself might feel that what he said was true. There was nothing in the circumstances in which he was placed, to negative or give the lie to such an assertion. A King in the kingdom of truth and the cross: are *these* contradictory ideas? Certainly not. Think you that truth, when she makes her appearance in the world, is welcomed only with garlands of flowers? Or, is it not rather true that those righteous men, who confessed themselves the servants of truth and who fearlessly testified for her in their life, have much more frequently received the crown of thorns to wear than a garland of flowers? There even occurs a passage in the writings of that prince among the wise men of old, Plato, which one may regard as an involuntary prophecy concerning our King of righteousness and truth. He says: "I am of opinion, that the truly righteous man, if he were to appear in the world, would be scourged, would be thrown into fetters, would be hanged." Thus speaks, prophet-like, that voice of antiquity. And thus may Pilate, if he had cared to look at all around him upon the world, to see how *it* is wont to deal with truth when she makes her appearance there,

have found no difficulty in putting faith in this saying, from the fact, that the man who uttered it was about to die an ignominious death. Besides, the Saviour doubtless expressed himself as he did with the intention that a Roman or a Greek ear should be capable of at once understanding him. For the devout Jew sought after the forgiveness of sins, and the Greek after wisdom and truth; and, before the Jews, Jesus called himself the King of the kingdom of God; before the Roman, on the contrary, he is the King of truth. The name is a high and noble one; let us now ponder what of majesty lies in it.

Let us begin with the idea which most naturally presents itself. A king is, at all times, the first citizen of his kingdom, and herein the Saviour declares that he is a citizen in the kingdom of truth, that, in other words, *truth is his home*, the region where, and where only, he feels himself at home. There is already in this admission a great step gained. Ye students! you are proud, and glory in the thought that in your present calling you have to do with nothing sensible, but with that which is not seen with the physical eye, or touched by the material hand. O, would that all who call themselves students, were men whose home is in the kingdom of truth, who feel themselves happy and at home only there; would that all students were only men who evidently strove after no blessings and enjoyments so earnestly as those which cannot be handled with the hand or seen with the eye! Were this the case, what a boon would a University be for the citizens of a town. At present,

the citizens accuse the universities of contributing to the demoralization of their towns. Then one might be able to point to the students and say, There you see that a man may find his life in enjoyments such as the hand cannot handle, nor the eye see! There you see that man liveth not by bread alone!

But the Lord does not call himself a citizen of this kingdom merely, he bears the name of its King. If it is the flower and nobility of the human race who find their home in the kingdom of truth, Christ is the king of these noblest children of humanity. Those may be counted by millions who seldom aspire to anything else than that which hands may handle and the eye may see. But hundreds, ay, and hundreds of thousands, there have ever been, who, impelled by an irresistible impulse which swayed the whole of their life, have striven, perhaps in great obscurity, towards the attainment of that most precious possession, truth, so incomprehensible, so unappreciable, to sense and sight. Yes, through the whole history of the human race there runs a chain of which such men as these form the golden links. Behold Christ in his majesty pointing to himself as the highest link in that chain. And if Christ is the head, then they are only members, and cannot therefore exist by themselves independently of him. They are made one only in him. He gives it to be understood that all the truth which had been in the world from the beginning meets and centres in him; that he is the sun, of which all the rest are only rays. He came, according to his own words, to fulfil the law and the prophets; that is, he came to

make full: thus also does he supply to all human longing and endeavour after truth, its accomplishment and fulfilment. But he, who possesses truth in such perfection, possesses it not for himself alone. We who have the light only mingled with darkness, we who walk in the twilight and wait for the perfect day, are come into the world, in the first instance, only to gain truth for ourselves, in order that we may let it shine into our hearts and light up every crevice of our being. But he is come into the world that he might bear witness of the truth.

You acknowledge the majesty of this testimony of our Lord. Do you now require that we should convince you of its *justice*? He has called himself *King* in the land of truth, might he not have contented himself with the title of *Prince*? For, is it indeed he who gives laws in every part of the wide domains of this kingdom? He speaks as if he owned the sovereignty of the whole land, and yet is it not, in point of fact, merely the little province of religion and morality that forms *his* kingdom? Or, has he indeed attained a position of supremacy in the regions of human wisdom? Was Christ initiated into the arcana of our modern science, our art, our commerce? And yet he speaks as if it was his right to administer laws within all these wide-stretching boundaries. And yet, he was not merely one of its many princes; no, Jesus was King in the land of truth. True it is, it is only in divine things that he brought truth into the world; he has taught us nothing but that knowledge which he learned in the Father's bosom—he has

taught men merely what God is, and what they are, and how, through himself, sinners may be brought to God. In so far as all earthly knowledge is concerned, he has left us mortals to our own striving and our own working. With how narrow a circle of truths did his apostles at first set out! But, I ask you, did not this small body of truths become, as the Lord had said, a leaven which, once admitted in ever so small a degree into the heart of man, was capable of regenerating humanity, and of transforming the whole face of sciences, of arts, and of civil institutions? I shall only adduce one circumstance, in order that you may recognize what the value of a strong faith is in the investigation of truth in all departments. All labour and endeavour in the search of truth can prosper only in the soil of moral earnestness, strong self-denial, and pure love.

The storm that tears and rends the ocean plain,  
Scatters the brightness that was mirror'd there.

Now, if it is true that faith, which Christ has brought down to us, imparts, in a wondrous degree, peace of heart, sincerity of self-denial, and purity of love, shall we not be justified in saying, that Christ rules as a King throughout the whole kingdom of truth? See ye not, ye inquirers after truth, to whatever class ye belong, see ye not that ye must first draw near to the service of God, if ye would tread the courts of the temple of science in a spirit becoming her ministers? Brothers, he who gives us a heart that has found rest in God, a heart pure, and

free from the things of earth, places us upon an elevation where we are capable, for the first time, of breathing the pure air of truth. How many exalted views and searching reflections has the gospel brought into the world, such as shed a new light in every region of knowledge and of life! Suffer me to mention two examples. Can it be denied, that it has only been since the time when the leaven of Christianity began to come into operation in the world, that the sanctuary of the world within, and the domain of human feeling, have been opened up to man in all their importance? And further, is it not only since then, that the individual man has come to be recognized in all his dignity, while, on the other hand, those of antiquity were wont to subordinate the individual to his family, his generation, and his nation? It is possible that Christ was King only over one province in the domain of truth, but he was King in that province which governs all the rest. Only that the relation between this province and the different spheres of knowledge is not like that of countries which are contiguous to each other, but is rather that of circles which lie within each other. Just as God is that Being who encircles everything finite with his own infinitude, without thereby annihilating that finite; so religious truth is that knowledge which encloses in its widest range all the other circles of knowledge, in order to glorify and perfect them all. Thus it stands uncontestedly certain, Jesus *had* a right to call himself the King of truth.

And you will be all the more convinced of this if

you endeavour to realize to yourselves how much it requires to be so much as a true citizen in the kingdom of divine truth, not to speak of the qualifications requisite to him who arrogates to himself the title of sovereignty therein. The knowledge of earthly things, of the sun, the firmament, the moon, the stars, does not, however much a man may possess of it, attain within the inner court of the soul, but remains without, and there it is chained to the understanding merely by the power of memory. But of heavenly things, a man can truly know only in so far as he *is*. You may learn by heart a thousand times out of your books what is meant by faith, and patience, and devotion, love—and yet, no definition can teach you what these things mean. He who, when all earthly stays have given way, has not stood serene and unmoved, being strong in faith; he who, when his proud heart has arisen in rebellion in the storm of passion, has not learned to subdue it, and to say to the troubled waters, “Peace, be still;” he who has never felt that he could weep to see others rejoice, that he could suffer want to see others satisfied; he who has never in fervent prayer to God forgotten the world and himself: such a man knows not what faith, patience, love, devotion, mean. He who could do all that, is a *man*; but the *master* is he who *is* what he knows. Now, what sealed to Jesus his divine prerogative as King of truth is, that Jesus *is* himself that absolute truth which he taught. He *is* that truth, for he does not say, “I have the truth,” but “I *am* the Truth;” and here, moreover, it is, that

his power as conqueror over the world lies. For, think you that he could have drawn the world to himself and subdued it, and brought it captive to his feet, in the way he did, if he had merely taught the truth, if he had merely held her up to the gaze of the world, even though he had done so all his life up to the moment in which he cried, "It is finished?" Do you not yourselves feel what a difference there is between the preacher who has the truth of which he discourses merely in his books and in his memory, and him who *is* himself the truth which he preaches? and yet in how very limited a sense can any of us say, "We are in very deed the truth which we preach to you." But this consideration leads me to another doubt that might be raised as to the justice of his claim. For it may be said, "Does it not belong to the King of truth that he should have that power to conquer which the possession of truth in its deepest nature, in its most absolute being, imparts?" King of truth! why hast thou not long ere now subdued the world? Why is the flock that owns the guidance of thy rod ever only the "little flock?" And thus, in answer to this objection, we must turn our glance from the claim of this King of truth to the subjects that own his sway.

We must turn our glance to the *subjects* of this King. I do not know, my brethren, how it is with you, but my own experience is, that since the glory of God first began to shine upon me in the face of Jesus Christ, I have felt no doubt assail me with greater power, than the doubt regarding his royal

rights, called forth by the view of the miserably small number of the subjects who own his supremacy and bow the knee to him. Yet man is born for the truth, yea he is made for Christ himself, and every one that is in Christ can say with the most sober assurance, "Man is truly man only when he is Christian." And now, when one looks on the eight hundred millions of men who are without the pale of Christianity, when within the Christian Church one deducts all those confessions which are involved in error; and again, in the true confession, those who do not believe it; and, once more, among those who confess well, those who do not *live* well—then, O thou King of truth, where is thy right to rule, since thou hast been able to subjugate unto thyself only so small a number? Let us, however, meanwhile simply inquire, *who is his subject, and how may a man become his subject?* The consideration of this question will dissipate the objection.

Who are his subjects? Wherefore should we confine our view to one single section of the Christian Church? Are not all the divisions of the Church of Christ just so many compartments and chambers in the once great palace upon whose portals is written the inscription, "There is no salvation, there is no other name given among men whereby they can be saved, but the name of Jesus Christ?" The same light shines into all the chambers of that palace, although it may fall more dimly into some and more brightly into others. And wherever the confession, "No salvation out of Christ!" is made, it is every-

where the same sun of grace that sheds down his beams, although these may fall more straight into some places, and more broken into others. It is imagined that the different Churches of Christ have now no longer anything in common? Or, is there not still remaining a common confession in which all Christians join? is there not still the apostolic creed which the humble peasants in the village churches around Halle, equally with the worshippers in St. Peter's at Rome, in which the sectarian chapels in London and the cathedrals of St. Petersburg unite and are as one; and to which you also every Sunday say Amen, in fellowship with the whole Christian Church that is under heaven? And are we not to call men who find in this confession of faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, their consolation in life and their support in death—are we not to call these men subjects of Christ? True, many among them have failed to understand aright many of his commandments. But he who in so far as he *does* understand the laws of his king, obeys them, is surely a true subject. Those who understand and do not obey, are, indeed, none of his subjects; although here too we must make a distinction between those who will not obey and those who would obey, but cannot obey as they would; and to this class we all belong. Thus, the number of his subjects is by no means so small; no emperor or king in Europe has more. The thought, however, that causes sorrow to a Christian heart is, that the number is so small compared with the multitude of those who, both without the Christian Church

and within her, disown the sovereignty of the King of truth. But who is chargeable with this, at whose door does the guilt lie? Let us listen to our text. There the Redeemer concludes the words we have been considering with that statement of infinite moment, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." What the intention of Jesus in using these words is, is apparent; he would roll away from himself the guilt of a man like Pilate. "If thou see not in me the King of truth, seek not to attribute the guilt of thy blindness to me," he would say. Jesus would thus throw off himself all the guilt of the unbelief of men, and their disobedience against his word. The Lord mentions two conditions as indispensably requisite to a man's recognizing in Christ the King of truth. "He who is of the truth heareth, that is, understandeth my voice." The voice must reach the ear. That is the first thing he presupposes. And if there are now upon the face of the earth eight hundred millions of men whose ear the voice of the King of truth has never reached, who is chargeable with this? Is it the fault of Christ? Is it not rather *your* fault, ye who are in the main indifferent to the cause of missions, that noble sign of the vitality of a Church? Alas, to such an extent are ye indifferent that in this city of thirty thousand Christians, scarce five hundred can be found to show so much interest in the cause as to support it with their contributions, or to pray together on its behalf. How many among the four hundred theological students who carry on their studies here, how many might be found who have never,

up to this hour, laid seriously to heart what a duty of love Christians owe to those eight hundred millions of men! How many of you pray with fervency and faith that the kingdom of God may come? If these millions of souls are to go through life without a Master of truth, if they are to go down into the pit without a Comforter in death, O! it will not be to *his* charge that you can lay it. Charge rather yourselves with it, you whose hearts are so poor in love!

The other condition implied in these words of Christ points out to us the way in which a man becomes a subject of this kingdom. "*He that is of the truth, heareth my voice.*" Thus, in whatever ear the voice of the King of truth may sound, that voice can be comprehended, can find its way to the heart, only of him who *is of the truth*. With what a sacred moral earnestness do these words appear to sit in judgment upon man's unbelief and want of faith in Christ. You have accustomed yourselves to look upon faith and unbelief as a thing, regarding which no moral guilt can be incurred, respecting which moral considerations do not come into account at all. But in these words it is brought home to your conscience, you are accused of a want of a moral love of the truth. The fact that you do not believe in Christ, arises from this want, and it is charged upon you as the incurring of moral guilt. You may think that to say this, is to go somewhat too far. What! because a man does not believe in the truth which appeared in Christ, is he on that account to be regarded as having no love of truth at all, and no affinity with her? Yes, it is so. "To

him that hath," saith the Lord in another place, "shall be given." On the other hand, Plato, that king of the wise of old, says, "Like draws to like."

You wonder, you are confounded! What! you exclaim, those men who were heroes in the empire of universal knowledge, those men, whom, throughout their whole life, the inextinguishable thirst for truth consumed—were *they* not of the truth? And yet, we cannot change the word of the King of truth, we can only echo what he says; therefore we must affirm, that *whoever bows not the knee before the King of truth, is not of the truth.* You have not accustomed yourselves, however, to contemplate in its right aspect, the thirst for truth which characterized the heroes of science. Was that, let me ask, always a thirst for truth in the things of God? It is preëminently and principally in the things of God that Christ is the king of truth, but how very far are we from being able to assert, that all those men whom we honour as investigators of science, were men who earnestly applied themselves to the inquiry after an answer to the question, How men are to come to God, how a sinner can become holy and be saved? Even among you students, how many might be found who are consumed by a thirst after truth in all other things, but who give no manifestation of being wasted by thirst for another truth—for truth concerning what God is, what Christ is, and in what way men may draw near unto God. But how can those who never felt this thirst be themselves that truth which recognizes in Christ the King of truth? Further, let me ask, is it

merely an intellectual interest in religious truth that is necessary in order to come up to what Christ here requires? Does he not say, "He that is *of* the truth, that is born of the truth." You must be born of the truth. The truth must be your mother. On her breast it is that you are to drink into your being the milk of life and of love. As children bear a resemblance to their mother, so men must be able to discover upon your features the lineaments of truth, and say, "These are men whose mother is the truth of God, and who draw from her the strength of their new life." Thus constituted are the men who are of the truth. It is only he who has set himself, with this holy earnestness, to the task of stamping the image of divine truth upon his life, who comes to understand how hard a thing it is not merely to have the truth, but to *be* of the truth. He alone it is, moreover, who longs for a Redeemer. He alone it is who can know what that sound from another world means, which is the voice of the King of truth.

O King of truth! our deepest being thirsts after a truth in divine things, which may not only illumine our spirits, but may also enkindle our hearts, and rule our life. King of truth! no other voice, we joyfully own, has pierced to our inmost heart, like the sound of thy voice. We doubt not of thy claim to rule. Thou hast thyself already proved it to our souls; and although we are so unfaithful, yet are we surely still thy subjects. O! do thou draw and allure us unto thee, until we lie down at thy feet, entirely and for ever subdued to heaven and to thee. Amen.

## SERMON VII.

THE COMMAND OF JESUS: "WEEP NOT FOR ME, BUT FOR YOURSELVES."

LUKE xxiii. 26-31.—And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?

You have stood with your Lord before Pilate; to-day let us accompany him on his way to the cross. As was the custom with those who had been sentenced to death by crucifixion, the tree of shame, on which he should die, is laid upon his own shoulders, and he bears it to the gate of the city. But, enfeebled by the load of sorrow he had endured, by the night-long agony and soul-struggle in Gethsemane, by the scourging and loss of blood, he is so faint that he sinks to the ground under the burden. Meanwhile, a man, who is returning from the fields, is laid hold of by the soldiers, and compelled to take his place. Possibly the man is of the followers of Jesus. In silence, the Saviour marches on his weary way—his eye fixed earnestly above, or turned thoughtfully within; what is passing in his soul who may tell!

One word, however, he lets fall on his way to Calvary; probably it was spoken at the moment when his fast-failing strength awoke most strongly the pity of the sympathizing women, by whom he was accompanied. We read in Luke xxiii. 26-31; "*And as they led him away, they laid hold upon one Simon, a Cyrenian, coming out of the country, and on him they laid the cross, that he might bear it after Jesus. And there followed him a great company of people, and of women, which also bewailed and lamented him. But Jesus, turning unto them, said, Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us; and to the hills, Cover us. For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?*"

Jesus did not pass away unwept. We find such as Mary, Salome, Magdalene, John, standing under his cross; and we may well imagine that those faithful followers formed part of this sad procession, walking along in tears and silent sorrow—yet, doubtless, at a certain distance, for fear of the authorities. Here, however, it is not these sympathizing spirits that come before us; they were from Galilee, whereas the parties addressed here were daughters of Jerusalem. Among them, possibly, there may have been seen the widow who cast the mites into the treasury at the temple;

Martha and Mary also, doubtless, and many more who had belonged to him. What lesson is taught us by the command to *weep for ourselves at the sight of the suffering Saviour?* Let us consider what was implied in those words, as addressed to the daughters of Jerusalem, what is implied in them now, what they will imply to all time.

“Weep not for me,” exclaimed the Lord. It is not that he would entirely forbid the shedding of all tears of sympathy with him in his sorrow; he rather means to enjoin that no tears shall flow for him but such as *flow along with tears for the guilt of men.* He does not absolutely forbid their weeping for him; he speaks rather by comparison, as in a similar instance, where it is said, “I will have mercy and not sacrifice:” that is, I will much rather have mercy than sacrifice. “You weep for me,” he would say, “it is well; but I would much rather have you weep for yourselves.” Tears might, and ought, to flow for him; but such tears may speedily be dried again: weep, Christians, weep for him, but you may soon dry your tears. For he left the world that knew him not; that returned him hatred for his love, and for his self-renouncing goodness, the scourge and the cup mingled with gall. The cross he bore shone around him, and from amid its darkness a light ineffable streamed forth. The way to the cross was the way to the throne, where he reigns now, and will reign for evermore. And therefore the Saviour cries to the children of his people, “Since *my* crown of thorns is to become a crown of glory—since *my* cross will be a throne of victory—

weep not for me, weep rather for *yourselves*." In the one clause, he expresses the *probability* of the stripes he looks for from the hand of God; in the other, the *certainty*. He expresses the probability of it in these words, "If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" He is the green tree, the tree of life, so full of sap and so fair in foliage, whose fruit gives life to all who eat thereof; and now, when men are coming to cut off its branches, and tear away its leafy glory, and hew down its noble stem, who does not every moment expect that a voice will descend from heaven—Forbear, stay your hand! But the sky above is voiceless and mute, darkness is allowed to complete its work, and the Holy One of God dies by the hand of murderers.

When an event like this takes place—when in a way like this, innocence succumbs without Heaven arming itself with lightnings in its defence—it not unfrequently happens, that the workers of iniquity wax bolder in their evil and say, "There is not a God that judges in heaven." When, however, a prophet's voice is heard sounding forth, and saying in the strength of God, "What is bleeding there is suffering Innocence, and every drop of blood it sheds will turn to an accuser against *you*;" then it is that, in frequent cases, the consciousness of that law which has struck so deep a root in the human heart, the consciousness of retribution awakes, and an idea, dim and dreadful, hovers over the soul of the evil-doers, that every blow they give will one day return upon their own head with tenfold fury. Therefore the

Saviour says, “If the God of judgment has not put forth his hand to prevent innocence from being exposed to such cruel sorrows, the contemplation of *my* sufferings may teach you most unmistakeably to infer of how much greater severity these sufferings will be, which fall back upon those who have inflicted them.” But the Saviour speaks not of a *probability* merely. No; the veil of the future is raised from before his eyes, and he sees with distinctness and certainty the signs of the coming wrath. “Behold,” he proceeds, “the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the breasts which never gave suck. Then shall they begin to say to the mountains, Fall on us! and to the hills, Cover us!” O Israel, foolish and deceived, thus it will be that the blow wherewith thou hast smitten the sacred head of the Holy One of God, will fall back with tenfold fury upon thine own. Hapless nation, from that day forward on which that dark deed shall have been committed, thou shalt have no more a king, or a priest, no more a temple, no more a fatherland. Then will come to pass what Moses prophesied of old, “The Lord shall scatter thee among all people, from the one end of the earth even unto the other; and the Lord shall give thee there a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee: and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life.” (Deut. xxviii. 64—66.) This is the fate to which the Saviour turned his eye when he exclaimed, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves

and for your children." And what sort of tears are we to weep? For there are so many kinds of tears in the life of man. Weep—weep tears of *anguish*—weep tears of sad *presage*—weep tears of *penitence*!

Weep tears of anguish—that is, at the thought of the greatness of the tribulation which is coming upon you and upon your children! There were at that moment, in the surrounding crowd, some who should survive those days. Christ had said, "Verily I say unto you, there be some standing here who shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power." The greater number, however, were not to see that day themselves, but their children should. In other cases, at other times, men are wont to call the unfruitful unblessed, and those who never bare; but in the times of those terrible judgments, they shall say, "Blessed are the barren." For, as Josephus, the national historian, informs us, there never was a race whose distress could at all be compared with the distress of Jerusalem, neither will there ever be a people so oppressed as Israel was. And thus Jesus cries, "Mothers, who love your children, weep tears of anguish!" The blinded, God-forsaken people had exclaimed, when Pilate delivered him into their hands, "His blood be on us, and on our children."—Then they will receive what they imprecated upon themselves, and his blood will come upon them and upon their children like a torrent of devouring fire. But it was not merely individuals that the calamity was to overtake, it was not families merely; no, destruction and ruin were denounced against the whole

nation. The curse which follows swift upon the heels of the fratricide, rendering insecure and treacherous the ground beneath his feet, was let loose upon them. Weep, then, tears of mournful *presage*, cries Jesus to his people, at the thought of the greatness of the fall of that nation which could once boast, "There is not any people like unto our nation, or any god like unto our God." We are, all of us, beloved, not merely individuals, not merely members of families; we must feel ourselves to be more than this; to be parts of one great whole, members of one nation and of one church. If we do not do this, it is because we fail in a want of expansiveness of vision, because we are chained by sense to the dust, and cannot rise above it. Thus the mothers of Israel are to weep not only tears of anguish for their own children, but every one apart is to weep tears of sad foreboding. For Israel was to be no longer the keeper of the mysteries of God; she was to loose that ornament by means of which she had become a crown among the nations, and had come to occupy that relation to them which the heart holds to the other members of the body. But more than this: Israel should be altogether erased from the roll of independent nations: should henceforward have no king, no priesthood, no temple, and no fatherland; should dwell among all other peoples, and be herself no people, scattered throughout all the earth, and yet without a home; confessing herself bound by the law of Moses, yet without priest or sacrifice to atone for her transgressions. You see all that now fulfilled, and you are moved; Israel has lived through it all,

and now that it has turned out so, she weeps tears of bitter disappointment and sad regret. O people of Israel! thou who once wast queen among the nations, how do thy tears flow, even to this very hour, at the thought that thou art fallen so low! But wherefore does the veil still remain before thine eyes, so that thou canst not recognize the cause of thy fall? Wherefore didst thou shed those tears of bitter regret over thy fall, and yet canst weep no tears of *penitence!*

Weep tears of *penitence*, cried the Redeemer to the men of that time. Perchance God might even then draw back his outstretched arm, ere it struck the fatal blow; perchance he might even then recall the avenging angel with his sword already unsheathed; perchance he might even then cry, Hold, destroy not! We may conclude, that by some at least the Saviour's call was obeyed, and penitential tears were shed, from the fact that the vials of wrath were not entirely poured forth. "Except those days should be shortened," says the Lord, "there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." But because only individuals shed those tears of penitence which ought to have flowed from the whole nation, the vials of wrath must be poured forth upon Jerusalem. And thus she that was as a queen among the nations, became as a servant: "She weepeth sore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks." (Lamentations of Jeremiah i. 2.) The people of the Jews have not themselves forgotten the greatness of their fall. On the contrary, they have carried with

them so strong an impression of it, that they have instituted a memorial of it in all things and for all time. Thus, whenever they build a house, they always have a portion of its walls, a yard in breadth, unplastered; on every festive occasion, room on the table for one dish is left empty; at every marriage-ceremony a glass is broken; and by this they signify that sorrow for the fall of Jerusalem shall be felt along with every joy. The anniversary of the day, on which the holy city was precipitated from its elevation, is kept with prayer and fasting; on that day no covered foot dare enter the sanctuary, no refreshing water may moisten their head or their hands; in the dust, on the naked floor, they wail their songs of lamentation. Israel, wherefore is it that ye rend your garments, and not your hearts? The tears ye weep are only tears of sorrow, tears of remorse—wherefore do ye not yet shed those tears of repentance which your fathers should have rained down years ago? But, do we not all the like? We bewail the consequences of our sins, but not these sins themselves. We mourn over the affliction and sufferings of our life, but we fail to ask what has brought them upon us, and to what end they are sent. The exclamation of our Lord, “Weep not for me, but for yourselves,” is applicable to men in all times, because in every age and in every clime, human nature is, on the whole, the same. And so the words of our Lord are applicable also to us. Therefore I repeat in *your* ears the words of Jesus. As often as the picture of the suffering Redeemer comes before your view, weep for *him*, because if

your heart is bound up, in love, with him, you cannot do otherwise than shed for him a kindred tear of sympathy. But weep also for yourselves, weep at the thought that it was at the hands of men that Jesus suffered and died. Would you weep manly tears by the cross of Christ, then let your tears for his suffering be mingled with tears for the guilt of men which caused these sufferings, and which was discovered in them. Weep, O men, tears of *foreboding*, tears of *penitence*, tears of *sympathy*, in the view of the cross of Christ.

Congregation of Christians, weep tears of *foreboding*, as you contemplate the manifestation of the reality of divine justice, which the authors of Christ's suffering brought upon themselves. See ye not, how the vials of the justice of God are emptied upon the men who are ripe for judgment. See ye not, how the tree, which has become thoroughly withered and dry, is hewn down without mercy, and its branches broken; how wherever the carcase is, there the eagles of divine justice delay not to accomplish their work? There are few things which make so powerful an impression on the careless man, as when a lightning-flash of divine justice descends, and strikes a deadly blow upon the head of the transgressor. Inasmuch as we are now under a dispensation of forbearance, the thunders of God go softly over the earth; and so gentle is their voice that the ears of most men hear them not. But there are times in which they fall with such a force that even the deaf must hear. And what an awaking then ensues! From that you may

infer what an awaking it will be, when the season of forbearance is gone by, and the day of the revelation of divine justice breaks, Sinners! who are still under forbearance, know ye not that when others are struck down with the flash of divine justice, their fall is intended as a warning for you? Ye careless ones, the downfall of Jerusalem is for you a gracious admonitory sign written on the page of history? See ye not, then, that there is a righteousness of God, which, although it may long retain its thunder, will in the end let it fall, certainly, irresistibly fall, upon the head of the guilty? Careless men, weep tears of foreboding for yourselves, as ye contemplate the fall of Jerusalem, for herein is disclosed to you what guilt is incurred by the man who persists in despising his Saviour. Others have already uttered the woeful cry, "Mountains, fall on us! hills, cover us!" And he who does not take warning in time, will even in eternity have to cry out, "Mountains, fall on us! hills, cover us!"

Weep for yourselves tears of *penitence!* For us? and wherefore? Have *we* smitten the Saviour's back with scourges, have *we* loaded him with insult, have *we* nailed him to the accursed tree? Have not the Jews done all this? Yes, the Jews did it, but in the Jews, mankind did it. Mankind, the whole human race, sinned in the Jews, and in them *we* incurred the guilt; for we bear in our bodies the same flesh and blood, the same lust and hate, and from Adam we are members of the same body with them. Do not deceive yourselves! When we contemplate our own

actions and those of others, with a view to make a distinction between them, we can doubtless point to one action as being ours, and to another as being our neighbour's. It may then appear to us as if there were no connecting bond between them, and as if every one had merely his own burden to bear. But it is not, it cannot be so. Our feelings, and indeed even our reason, tell us another story. Is not the man of our country, who has achieved some deed of renown—is he not the pride of the whole nation and of ourselves? and that member of a family who has covered himself with ignominy, is he not a load upon our own heart? This feeling is surely not a wrong one. On the contrary, it is right and proper, because they are men, and whether united to us by the ties of family or relation, or merely bound to us by a common descent from Adam, they are still, in a greater or less degree, our blood-relations.

Hast thou a fallen brother?  
Boast not thyself as free.  
The guilt that stains another,  
Shares he it not with thee?

Because it is mankind that has fallen, it is human nature in which all sinners participate. Mankind is to feel in common whatever great or noble thing it has produced, for by men that great and noble thing was achieved. When Christ performed miracles, it is said, as we read, the people praised God “who had given such power to men,” to *men*, we read, not to one man. At Christmas we celebrate, by a solemn

festival, the fact that a Christ was born into humanity. And thus, too, the whole of mankind must feel in common the *sins* which mankind has sinned; and men must weep that it should have been men who nailed this Christ to the cross. Yes, on this account will I be penitent for the iniquities which men have perpetrated upon the Holy One of God; for it was *my* human nature, *my* unbelief, *my* hardness of heart, it was the carnality that dwells in *my* breast that brought him to the cross. And therefore will I sit down beneath his cross, and there shed penitential tears. I will weep to think that that human nature, which dwells also in me, should have become so deeply corrupted, that it could so shamefully outrage the Saviour of men. Ye tender-hearted souls, which on Good-Friday shed tears of compassion over the sorrows of a righteous man, O, let it be manly tears that ye shed! And the tears of Good-Friday are manly tears only when tears over human guilt are mingled with those that flow at the contemplation of His sufferings.

Finally, weep tears of *sympathy* for that people which was in this case the instrument of the sin of mankind. A barbarous age regarded that unhappy race as the murderers of the Saviour, and acknowledging the curse under whose burden to this hour they groan, imagined that it was its part to deal with redoubled force the blows with which the Divine justice had visited them. We have seen, through the public prints, that even in our own times this German people are capable of similar feelings of hatred and

revenge. But to seek to take human revenge upon the guilty one upon whom God has poured out his vials of wrath, and laid his heavy hand—can such an idea occur to any but one who is entirely negligent of the duty of examining his own heart? Christians! surely no other feeling but one of sympathy for those whom God hath smitten is becoming in us; for we mourn and weep at the cross of Christ, to think that it was men who slew the Holy One of God, and because we feel that the same human nature, with all its sins and lusts, dwells in our own breast. It was indeed God who spoke at the fall of Jerusalem, and he spoke with the voice of a Judge, and the whole world heard his voice, and he said, “Now have I taken my Spirit away from them. Once I had hid them under the shadow of my hand as my dear children, but now I have withdrawn my right hand from them, and the branches of that noble olive tree are hewn down, that others may be grafted in. And who, feeling and owning that it is to grace alone that he owes it, if in their place he has been grafted in, can do otherwise than *tremble* for himself, can do otherwise than *pray* for them. What! would we take vengeance on them, instead of praying for them? The words of the Lord which form our text call upon every Christian man to bestow his sympathy upon the Jew, upon whom the hand of Divine justice lies so heavily. For behold Christ himself bestowing it on them. He, whose back, already torn with scourges, they load with the heavy cross, forgetful of his own pain, thinks with sympathizing sorrow of the tribulation coming

upon his tormentors; and are we to avenge, instead of praying? O brethren, are the words that Paul spoke in his time not in force till this day, "Because of unbelief, they were broken off; and thou standest by faith. Be not *high-minded*, but *fear!*" No! what becomes us in our treatment of the descendants of those who nailed the Saviour to the cross, is certainly not arrogance and high-mindedness. We should rather look on them with tears of alarm, and then, turning our eye within upon ourselves, remember that a day may come when, in our case also, the forbearance of God may be turned to anger. We should contemplate them with tears of penitence, and weep to think that sin has so great a power over man. We should regard them with tears of sympathy, since our Saviour, even in the midst of his own great sorrow, has not withheld from them such tears.

O Christians, let me once more call upon you to weep—shed manly tears in the contemplation of the sufferings of your Redeemer; weep, so that with your tears over his sufferings, tears over your own guilt may mingle! Amen.

## SERMON VIII.

THE PRAYER OF JESUS: "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM, FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO."

LUKE xxiii. 33-35.—And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding: and the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God."

DISCIPLES of the Lord:—You have been accompanying your Master to the cross; you have heard how, even on that way, words of compassionate love flowed from his gracious lips. Listen to him this day as he speaks to us from the cross itself. The seven sayings of the Redeemer on the cross shall form henceforth the subject of our meditations. And if some of you have remained till now unimpressed by the words of the living, O, be not indifferent to the words of your dying Lord! You are wont to listen full of reverence to the words of a dying man: what Christian will not hearken when it is his dying Saviour who speaks to him? O thou exalted Lord and Saviour! thou hast said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Now art thou lifted up, lifted up far above the cross, to the throne of thy heavenly Father. Draw us unto thee; draw us this very day!

The first saying on the cross we read in the words which follow our last meditation, Luke xxiii. 33—35:

*"And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, (the place of a skull,) there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided him, saying, He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God."*

When the Redeemer spoke these words, the work of crucifixion had not yet been completed. This we gather from the fact that he does not say, "They know not what they have *done*," but, "They know not what they *do*." His arms have already been stretched upon the beam of torture: his hands have been bound to the wood with ropes; they are now about to be pierced with nails, and the feet likewise. Meanwhile the soldiers who are sitting by, cast lots for his clothes. There the people stand looking on; here the rulers stand mocking. What a scene is this! It is as though one saw a lunatic laughing and sporting beside the corpse of his benefactor, whose blood, in unhallowed madness, he had that moment shed! Surely whoever requires a proof that sin is *blind* may find one here. It is something very frightful to see a whole nation in the act of commencing to perpetrate a deed, which, so long as it shall have a name upon the earth, will brand it with infamy in the eyes of men, and mark it with a curse before God, and all the while there is not one among them all that *knows what they do!* This was literally true; for not even the disci-

ples, however much they knew of the Saviour, were in a condition to measure the full significance of what there took place. There was only One, who knew, in all its import, what was then going forward: the man upon the cross himself. We are oppressed by the thought; it descends upon us like a spiritual ban. But there breathes upon us from the cross, like a gentle gale to soothe and to soften us, that utterance of the crucified Saviour, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We shall unfold a little the thoughts of the Redeemer when he said these words, and the thoughts which they are fitted to call forth in us.

*The thoughts of the Redeemer when he said these words.* The first thought is, that humanity never committed a more grievous crime than that which those men are committing. And together with that thought there rises before his eye what mitigates their guilt. Finally, he thinks to what extent their sin can be forgiven, and in how far it is retained.

The thought is before his soul, that *never has humanity committed a more grievous crime.* The pitying sorrow of the Redeemer has shown us already how great he thought the guilt which they were heap-ing upon themselves. Remember the tears he wept on his entrance into Jerusalem. It is but rarely that even a tender-hearted man can bring himself to shed tears over the guilt of others; but Jesus wept over the guilt of Jerusalem. Then, recollect how, when he lay under the burden of the cross, he spoke of a load which would fall upon them like a mountain.

But the strongest proof that he regarded their guilt as something extraordinary, is seen in the fact, that he could, in such an hour as this, forget his own sorrow, in order to think of their guilt. Consider, too, that he alone could comprehend that guilt in all its proportions, and in all its relations. Who that Man was, whom those wicked hands nailed to the cross—this was known then in its magnitude by no one—is scarcely known now, for “no man knoweth the Son, but the Father.” No man knew then whence he came, or whither he went, what he bore in himself, or what he brought mankind. He himself alone knew all this, and therefore he alone knew all that was implied in the fact, that the hands of men had outraged such a Man as this. And he knew this guilt in its relations—in its connection with man’s history upon earth, in its connection with the world of spirits. It was only he, who could cast his eye over the long chain of manifestations of Divine grace, of which he was himself the consummation. He alone could look back to the first tints of light, which had appeared on the horizon of prophecy, thousands of years before, and could trace how that light had ever become clearer and clearer, until at length the Sun of Righteousness, which it heralded and foretold, arose upon the world. Again, his eye alone could pierce into the spiritual world, and there perceive the powers of darkness celebrating the triumphs of darkness around his cross. “Now is the hour of darkness,” he said; “now the prince of this world cometh, but

he has nothing in me." He alone knew their guilt in all its breadth, in all its height, in all its depth.

But at the same time, there arises before his soul the thought of what *mitigates their guilt*. Behold here again the pitying heart of Jesus! In the endurance of the most painful sufferings at the hands of his enemies, in circumstances where, as one might think, even a righteous man would have thought it right, to think of nothing but their guilt itself, not of that by which the guilt was extenuated. See how even here his compassionate soul thinks of that! And what is that which extenuates their guilt? Is it that the transgressors were so utterly blind? And can it be said that this obscuration of spiritual sense formed a ground of extenuating their crime, of diminishing their guilt? And shall it be said, that those men who, in cold blood, are nailing to the cross the hands from which only blessings had flowed; these others, who, in their folly and insensibility, are casting dice even at the foot of the cross; that third party, who look on cold and unmoved; and a fourth who blaspheme—what! shall the fact of their ignorance and indifference form the very ground of their excuse?

My friends, this very deadness and dullness of heart is itself a sin. Wherever a similar insensibility, to that which the people round the cross of Christ exhibited, is displayed, it goes up to heaven as a loud and clamant accusation. And yet I say not the less, that this kind of blindness *is*, in a *certain* aspect, a ground of palliation of the offence, and the Saviour

may still pray for pardon, even for men who are so obtuse and so dark. For surely the case had been very different, their crime had been far more awful, if he had had to say, "They know what they do!" Is the crime equally heinous, when the drunken son, who cannot recognize his father and benefactor, rushes forward, and—O, horrid thought!—in his drunken frenzy, plunges into his body the murderous knife; and when a son, in calm, sober deliberateness, deals the parricidal blow? The alleviation is a sad one, I allow; but still an alleviation it is, when the voice of the Judge is able to say, "They know not what they do." Is it then true, that in this instance they know not what they do? In reply to this we say, only in very different degrees can ignorance of what they were doing be predicated of these different parties to this crime. Thus, for example, the Roman soldiers, who had possibly never heard him speak, were merely the blind instruments by which the will of their superiors was executed. We see, moreover, that even among them there must have been hearts with human sympathies and feelings, for did not the centurion exclaim, as the last faint ray of dying light fell from the eye of the Crucified into his heart, "Verily, this was a righteous man!" Then the people acted, to a certain extent, in ignorance; the priests had persuaded them that a sacrifice well-pleasing to God was here offered up. Many of them, doubtless, stood there with a similar belief, that they were engaged in a good work—to that which the women had, who brought faggot upon faggot to the pile where

the martyr Huss was burnt. Thus, too, the rulers of the people were not fully conscious of what they did; nor was even the high-priest, although he had certainly spoken against the testimony of his own conscience, when he said, "He is guilty of death." In some degree, it could be said of all, even of Caiaphas, that they knew not what they did; even Caiaphas knew it not, for he was far too common a sinner to be able clearly to understand the import of the crime he committed. He who knew better than any of them what he had done, was Judas, and for Judas the Lord has no prayer for pardon to offer; of Judas he must say, "Better were it for him that he had never been born." But there was a long gradation of wickedness and guilt from Caiaphas to Judas; and again there was a long way from Caiaphas down to the blinded multitude, and the unquestioning servants of the law. The guilt of the one and of the other, can, as I have already said, be measured by no one but by Him who holds in his hands the line of eternal justice. The all-seeing eye alone can know the thousand unseen threads by which circumstances and human transgression are linked together, which connect error with sin; and, on the other hand, the guilt of one man with that of another: the all-seeing eye alone knows likewise what measure of guilt attached to each individual in the deed of blackness which was done at Golgotha—that there are degrees of wickedness as well as of responsibility; and that even the weakest of all judges—a Pilate for instance—is not accounted guiltless. This is a truth which the Saviour himself expresses in the

presence of Pilate, “Thou couldst have no power at all against me except it were given thee from above: therefore he that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.” And yet they had all, more or less, perhaps only with the exception of Judas, the benefit of the prayer, “They know not what they do.” This thought might, to a certain extent, serve to calm the troubled heart of the Saviour, as it calms our own. Only imagine, for a moment, that it had been otherwise, and that all of them had set about the work of infamy like Judas, with open eyes and conscience unobscured; and then picture to yourselves the scene as before the cross—the dice, the gazing multitude, the scoffing. No! it could never be tolerated, for then they that stood round the cross were no longer men—but an army of devils.

“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Yes, there is a touching mildness in this petition, which strikes one at the first glance; but have you ever duly considered what a deep, sacred earnestness there is in it at the same time? In speaking of a sin which may be *forgiven*, is there no reference to another kind of guilt, which cannot be forgiven, which is *retained*? To what length does his petition for forgiveness go? It reaches only as far as their *ignorance* reached, according to the various degrees of it. By these words, the Lord shows, that there is a condition which renders the forgiveness of sin impossible—that there is a sin for the pardon of which he will not pray. *In so far as their sin was committed with knowledge*, he cannot pray for

its forgiveness. This is the awful side of those gracious words of Christ. Sin committed without better knowledge is still sin; it is still something that should find no place in man, which is where it ought not to be, and therefore it stands in need of the grace of God, it refuses to be forgiven; but such sin can be and is pardoned, even before it is repented of, in the sense of the word which Paul spoke to the Athenians, “The times of your ignorance God overlooked.” The hour in which God requires men to repent has arrived, only when a knowledge of the sins imparted, as in the same passage Paul says, “But *now* he commandeth all men everywhere to repent.” But the commission of wilful sin is itself a declaration that the sinner will not repent, at all events will not in that moment when he sins, for if he would repent he would do so ere even the deed was done. And therefore, for wilful and deliberate sins, there is no prayer for pardon, until repentance has first awoke within the breast, and ah! how hard is it to awake the heart to repentance, when her voice has already been, once and again, rudely put to silence. The clearer the knowledge with which the sin is committed, the more difficult will it be to repent, and the more impossible to obtain forgiveness. Every deliberate transgression is only an inferior degree of that sin concerning which it is written, that it will never be forgiven, either in this life or in the life to come—the sin against the Holy Ghost. And wherefore can that sin not be forgiven? Because it renders the heart so hard, that no beam of the light of God can ever soften it again, no flash of

the love of God ever make it tremble. For, as we read in the epistle to the Hebrews, "it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance, seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame." (Heb. vi. 4—6.) The more distinctly thou knowest it, the more difficult will repentance be, and the harder it is to repent, the more impossible it is to be forgiven. The Lord has no prayer for forgiveness to present on behalf of Judas, because Judas knew what he did, and all we read of him is, "It had been good for that man if he had not been born." Now, in so far as the sins committed at Golgotha were wilfully and knowingly committed, the judgment of God has, even in time, overtaken them. Judas, who better than any of them knew what he had done, fell the victim of his own remorse. The many sins of knowledge which brought Jesus to the cross were visited with judgment in time, in those days when the temple of Jerusalem was burnt up with fire. And yet even in those days of horror, the prayer, "Father, forgive them," for their sins of ignorance sake, was heard. For, as Paul exclaims, "God hath not wholly cast away his people"—and thus a day of salvation is yet in store for Israel. O my brothers! you dare not make light of sin, for there are sins for which the Saviour asks no forgiveness.

You see, then, what were the thoughts which filled

the Saviour's mind when he spoke the words of our text, and those words call forth the same thoughts in us. Arise then, ye sinners that are at ease, arise and acknowledge,

1. *That beneath the cross of Christ men act in the same way now as they did then; and,*

2. *That now as then it is true of these sinners beneath the cross, that they partly know not what they do, and partly know what they do; so that their sins are in part forgiven, and in part retained.*

*Beneath the cross of Christ men act in the same way now as they did then.* We stand and cry out against the wickedness and obtuseness of the Jews beneath the cross, and we do not recollect that, unto this very day, everything they did is repeated and acted over again by those who call themselves Christ's disciples. For to this day, Christians nail their Saviour to the cross, and if they pierce not his hands and his feet, still they pierce his heart. Do you inquire, who does this? Ye do it, you who have not even strength enough in his name, and by looking up to him, to combat and to shun the commission of known sins. O let us not deceive ourselves in this matter—think, how wide in *our* lives, is that sphere over which known sins have sway. Probably no one will be found, who, with clear knowledge and deliberate will, consents to do what his conscience condemns; but, I ask you, are there many here who can render to themselves this testimony, that they never give the lie to their conscience, never apply to it a sleeping-draught, never seek to put off their con-

science with excuses and self-justifications, to which they themselves do not seriously give credit? And if you have done this, you are guilty of wilful sins, and your wilful sins are the nails which pierce the heart of your Redeemer. But to go further: what a multitude of Christians are there up to this very day, who stand and stare beneath the cross, without being sensible of an emotion or a thought. Surely they think and feel nothing there; for if they did, would not the first thought and feeling be one that would arise with a power in their souls, mighty enough to change and transform their whole life? Would not their first thought be this: "What am I doing for Him who has done so much for me?" Further: I see that now, as in those days, men can sport and jest, can throw dice and play cards at the foot of the cross, without ever thinking on that cross and on Him who, for man's sin, hung bleeding there. Ye old men, ye young men, say, is your Christianity one which carries with it into all the occupations, into all the pleasures and recreations of life, the thought of the cross of Christ? Or, are you of those whose gaiety would become mute, whose joy would grow pale, if the thought or the name of the cross of Christ were once intruded upon it? Christians, do not forget that no sport or jest or pleasure can stand in the sight of God, where one must first cast out of one's mind the thought of the cross of Christ before one can be happy.—Finally: To this very day men are capable of mocking beneath the cross. The scoffer still re-echoes the taunt, "He saved others, himself he

cannot save." Ah, has he no idea of a Love which came into the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; has he no idea that this is just the spiritual crown and glory of Christ, that he who had saved others, *would not* save himself. O that this meditation on the sufferings of Christ may not be fruitless to any of us! Christians, it is not at the Jews that we should be confounded, when we beheld them gaming and mocking by the cross of Christ; it is rather our own Christian people that should put us to shame, and our own selves in so far as we are partakers in their sin!

Yes, let us be amazed and confounded at ourselves, because it is true of us now, as it was of the Jews then: in part we know not what we do; in part, again, we do know what we do; hence it is true of us, that our sins are partly forgiven us; partly, however, are they retained before God. Partly the benefit of these words is put down to *our* account; we know not what we do. You have not belonged to that happy number who learn in infancy to lisp their Saviour's name; perhaps you never once in your life saw your fathers bend their knees in prayer; your pastors were wont to preach the imaginations of their own heart, instead of the thoughts of the heart of God; in the whole wide circle of your acquaintance you did not possess a single friend who bore you on his heart in intercession before God. And if, in these circumstances, you can look upon your dying Lord without feeling your heart burn within you, if you can even pursue your own pleasure at the foot of that very

cross on which the Son of God is giving up his life for you, then it may be said of you, “Ye know not what ye do.” Remember, however, this very ignorance on your part is guilty in the sight of God! Were not our sins of ignorance still *sins*—even although they may be pardonable sins—would the Lord have occasion to pray for their forgiveness? That ye know not what ye do, is possible; but, I ask you, might you not have known it? No one has pointed out to you where you might find the pearl of great price—no one has presented that pearl to you, and held it up before you in the sun, and shown you its brightness and its purity; but have you never heard of a certain merchant, who went forth himself in *search* of pearls, and who, when he had found one of rare and costly beauty, went and sold all that he had, and bought that pearl of great price? They have not brought the pearl to you, but why have you not gone out to seek it on the market-place of life? See, it is this want of longing after salvation, this being content to feed your immortal soul on husks, this it is that condemns you. You belong to those sinners who sin in ignorance; but you belong also to those who might have known, had they chosen. Still, for you the Saviour prayed. And if ye will only now, if ye will in this moment, when the pearl of great price is held before you, stretch forth your hand and take it, if ye will sell all that ye have to buy this pearl, then doubtless will the benefit of these words of Paul be given to you, “The times of this ignorance God hath overlooked.” And for *you* the Saviour on

the cross hath prayed. But according to the measure of your knowledge of what you did; in so far as the pearl was held up before you, and its beauty pointed out to you, and you refused it; if the tears of your parents, the sighs of your teachers, the uplifted hands of your pastors, rise up as witnesses against you; and if all these cry out against you, “*We* are innocent of their blood—their blood come not on us, but on their own heads; if such be *your* case, alas for you! For the Lord asks no forgiveness for those who sin wilfully—who sin against their better knowledge. How much harder it has become for you to repent and be converted now than it was before! The more reckless and persistent the course of sin is, the harder does the heart become; the greater the hardness of heart, the more difficult is repentance; the more difficult repentance, the more impossible is forgiveness. O that this prayer of the Lord, which prays with such graciousness for those who sin through ignorance, may recall, with solemn earnestness, to the minds of all here present, the fact, that there are sins for which, even in this life, the Saviour does not pray, and which are *retained* even until the sinner comes to repentance; and yet every step he takes makes his repentance all the more arduous, and all the more hopeless. How do these words on the cross call to us, in God’s name, not to make light of sin! O, what a serious thing sin must be, if all sins of knowledge are retained before God, and if even our sins of ignorance stand in need of pardon!

O cross of Christ! thou rock for the falling and

the rising of many, thou tree of life, and thou tree of damnation!—tree of life for sinners through ignorance, tree of damnation for all those who sin against Thee and know what they do—O! may the day never come when it shall be said of so much as one of us, “it had been better for that man if he had not been born, for in sinning he knew what he did!” O Saviour of love, grant that when our dying hour shall come, the prayer of thy dying hour may be heard for us! Amen.

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## SERMON IX.

### CHRIST AND THE PENITENT THIEF.

LUKE xxiii. 39–43.—And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

BELOVED in the Lord:—We are engaged in the contemplation of the seven sayings of the Redeemer on the cross. It is as if, in these seven sayings, seven doors of his soul were opened before us, through every one of which a different brightness pours, to call up each a different emotion in our heart. From the first of them the graciousness of pardon beamed forth upon us, to calm and pacify our perturbed and

distracted spirit. To-day through another open door stream forth the serenity and majesty of the Saviour, even in his deep humiliation. Soon will the “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani,” sound in our ear, and we shall experience how deep the abyss of sorrow was, into which, from love to us, the Lord descended. We read to-day, in Luke xxiii. 39—43, the words: “*And one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise!*”

What an occurrence is this! Who would have expected such a scene on such a stage, on that very stage where blindness is showing itself in its deepest obscuration, and obtuseness in its most revolting obduracy? One might have expected to have seen the light of majesty break forth from amid the Saviour’s humiliation beneath the cross, and this takes place upon the cross itself. Is there, then, beneath the cross, among those four or five thousand souls, not one that wakes, is there not so much as one among those hard hearts that becomes soft? No; beneath the cross there was not one, but upon the cross itself there was one. Here too is human expectation deceived. Behold the two-fold scene which our text

displays: it represents *the repose and majesty of the Redeemer in his deepest humiliation*, and at the same time *the penitence and faith of a sinner in his last moments*. This calm tranquillity of the Lord, and this penitence of the malefactor, are equally well fitted to make us tremble. *O God, our heavenly Father! help us to humble our proud hearts under thy word!*

Let us contemplate the repose and majesty of the Redeemer even in his deepest abasement. They had placed the crown of thorns on his head, they had scourged his back, had spat upon his face, had bound his hands, they had nailed him to the cross between two malefactors. That he must breathe his last between malefactors, he himself characterizes as the lowest stage of his appearing in the form of a servant. This too, as he says at another place, must be fulfilled: he is numbered with the transgressors. But it seems as if even here a deeper degradation awaits him: even among those transgressors, he becomes the object of scorn and insult. You have read it many a time, but perhaps you have never thought what this implies. A malefactor, a common criminal, saying in the face of the Christ, “Brother, thou too art as I am! I have played a dangerous game, and so hast thou; thou wouldst play the king of Israel—thou seest now what comes of it, when one aims too high!” O holy Majesty, where are then thy lightnings, and if thou hide them, where is then the thunder of thy speech! O King of Heaven, deeper in thy humiliation couldst thou not have gone down! But even then Jesus suf-

fers and is silent. How does this silent tranquillity act with the power of a heavenly charm upon the spirit. Let us once more humble ourselves before him, once more here, as he stands on the lowest platform of ignominy. O my brother, I too have a heart of flesh and blood, and I know what it is to permit one's honour to be trodden under foot by brute force or blind malevolence, and yet, even in such circumstances I call upon you, in view of the calmness of Jesus: Avenge not yourselves, but commit yourselves to him that judgeth rightly! O all ye hearts to whom honour is a thing of value, you may look down on those who do not feel that honour is a possession, a possession too for which a man must be willing to stake something—but at the same time you must look up when you contemplate him, who, although his is an honour before which angels stand and worship, even in this moment does not avenge himself, but endures and is silent, even when a servant smites him in the face, even when a malefactor says to him, “Thou art like us!” I know how the heart, especially of you young men, boils at the very thought of being called on to submit to such injustice, I know how your pulse fevers and your eye flashes. “Rather life than honour!” I hear you cry. And yet, I ask, can you in your heart of hearts do otherwise than worship before the celestial repose which, in the full consciousness of its honour and majesty, was at the same time able to forego retaliation, and in silent magnanimity to suffer and to bear? Brothers, if your zeal for wounded honour is manly, believe me, the

calmness with which Jesus suffers is divine. But what if the darkness of approaching death has already cast its shadow across his mental eye? Has he in the weakness of dissolving nature ceased to acknowledge either his own innocence or his own majesty? Was he silent, because he was no longer conscious, no longer felt that the head which was there insulted was one which God had anointed that it should be the head of all heads, of all princes, thrones, and powers, in heaven and on earth? No, not such was the cause of his silence. Behold, now Jesus suffers and is silent. But when, in the absence of all other testimony, the testimony of a malefactor is heard, then does Jesus show that he has endured all, in the full consciousness both of his holiness and of his majesty, as he utters those wondrous words, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." Consider first how these words reveal the consciousness of his holy innocence. In the eye of man he is condemned, and the cross is for him the tree of ignominy; but in the eye of God he is holy, and the cross is but the lowest footstep of his throne—"This day even, he is to be"—where? Who does not listen with strained attention for the answer; where, O where are the souls of the holy among men, after the last sigh has died in their breast, and the last fight has been fought? This very day, he says of himself, he is to be—"in *paradise!*" That one might wish to have cast a deeper and fuller glance than these words allow into the world that lies beyond the grave, we will not deny. But the Redeemer speaks to the penitent soul, and speaks as such a soul alone can

understand; and we must own that for our religious feeling, at least, these words—"in paradise"—are sufficient. And so the dying Saviour is to be to-day in that place, where for man no more thorns and thistles grow, where there will consequently be no more sweat of his face and no tears from his eyes; he will be there, where God will once more, as in the days of innocence, say to man, My child! and man, full of confidence, will reply, My Father! He will be there, there to-day. And Jesus knew this, and therefore he was silent when his holy innocence was insulted, and when even a criminal dared to say to him, "Art not thou even like unto us?" He was silent, although he was well aware, not only that that day he would be in paradise, but that he held in his pierced hand the keys of that paradise. Behold here his majesty! He, whom they have condemned, appears as himself the arbiter of life and death, and awards eternal blessedness or pronounces the sentence of damnation. He, whom they are crucifying as a blasphemer of God, bestows as the Son of God the privileges of adoption in the kingdom of his Father. The cross has become a judgment-seat; the cross has become a throne! And thus, even in the depths of his humiliation, he was ever conscious of his majesty. With this consciousness he suffered in silence, when they nailed him to the cross; with this consciousness he endured without a murmur, even when they erected beside him the crosses of criminals, and allowed it to pass in silence when one of the malefactors said to him—to him, the Judge of all—"Thou art as we are!" O dying Saviour,

how dost thou, even in thine hour of death, breathe on men a breath of life! The breath of a new spirit comes upon me from my dying Lord. Now, I learn that there is a very different kind of honour, from that which is called honour among men. Yes, to be silent as thou wert silent, is nobler than to speak; to suffer as thou didst suffer, is greater than to avenge one's honour! We renounce and set aside all ideals, all exemplars of our own creation, in order that we may this day lose ourselves entirely in the contemplation of thy serene repose!

Christians, we have been led into sin a thousand times by hearkening to flesh and blood. Let this be a day of humiliation for every act of self-revenge, for every passionate word, every ebullition of our proud, undisciplined heart. Let us this day kneel down by the cross, and, in the presence of him who was serene and composed even when enduring the deepest dishonour, let us take the vow upon us to be dispassionate and calm like him—"Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord, I will repay." Ye who, for your Saviour and his cause, seek not yourselves to avenge your honour, but rather commit it into the hands of him who holds the reins of universal government, believe it, he will conduct your cause and bring it to a happy issue. The hour will come when your honour will be made to shine forth like the light, and even here, if *you* are silent, God will raise up others to speak for you. "If these are silent, the stones will cry out." Even among the malefactors, he found one to vindicate the honour of the Saviour when he was silent, and the

malefactor on the right rebuked the blasphemous insolence of him who hung upon the left. Thus will he in his own time bring your honour also to the light. But in order to be able thus to surrender the work of vindicating one's honour into the hands of God, faith, strong faith is necessary, a faith well ordered and sure—a faith so heroic and so strong, that it will not grow faint or feeble, even should innocence and majesty ignored have to wear for a time the meanest and most menial raiment; in a word, a faith like that which the thief upon the right hand of the cross possessed. You have humbled yourselves in contemplation of the Saviour's repose: that no flesh may glory in his presence, learn now, ye proud spirits, to humble yourselves before the penitence and before the faith of a malefactor.

Let us now cast our eye upon him. Look with confusion of face at the penitence and the faith of this sinner in his last moments. What! you exclaim, be ashamed and humbled before this criminal? I know how your proud flesh and blood shrink back from the thought. Perhaps your pride has already more than once risen up against this sinner, because he was saved in the last moments of his life by grace alone. For you belong to the class of people who bring to the Judge of the world their many virtues and good works; and to think that you should humble yourselves before a criminal who is converted in the very last hour of a life of sin! But however unpalatable it may be, you must be content to do so, so long as, with all your virtues and good works, you omit to

bring to God those sacrifices with which alone he is well pleased; for those were just the sacrifices which this malefactor in his last moments brought, and without which no mortal can find access to God. Those sacrifices are *penitence* and *faith*. Look, are the offerings he presents not exactly those which, according to the doctrine of our Church, are necessary to the regeneration of a man? He brings faith and repentance, a heart that owns its sin, that confesses it before God and men, that even willingly submits itself to the punishment of that sin; at the same time, he brings a heart which, even in the very moment between life and death, believes in free, unmerited grace, through Jesus Christ.

This malefactor was penitent, and in his penitence he is held out before us for our humiliation. In the first place, he acknowledged his sin. He began by fearing God. "Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation," he says, and in these words he gives us to know that he has acknowledged his sin. For there is no man, who feels and owns his guilt without at the same time being sure of pardon, who can do otherwise than stand in awe of God. In these days the *fear of God* appears to have vanished from among men; they possess no longer what the Bible calls "the beginning of wisdom." Nor is it strange that it should be so. Instead of dealing with God on account of their sin, they are content to make up matters with *themselves*. If ye judge yourselves, and forgive yourselves, arranging everything after your own pleasure, is it to be wondered at, that

ye do not fear God? But in this, O mortals, ye are seeking to encroach upon the rights of God, for "no one can forgive sins, but God alone." What, shall the guilty man himself be his own judge? Ye measure yourselves by yourselves, and instead of looking into the mirror of the word of God, ye merely look into your own conscience. Yes, if your conscience had been a bright, clear mirror, polished by the hand of God, then it might have been otherwise. But your mirror is dim, ye have breathed on it the breath of your vanity and self-love, and it is not your true selves ye see reflected there; and then how seldom and superficially do you look at yourselves even there! Or do you imagine that it is only the criminal in his prison, and the condemned upon the scaffold, who have occasion to stand in awe of God. I ask rather, who is there but should stand in awe of him, who has nothing between him and his guilty soul save the testimony of an awakened conscience? "Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?" —the question from the dying thief is addressed to the whole world of sinners, who are lying in carnal security. And because this malefactor, when he came to the knowledge of his sin, feared God and humbled himself before him, all those secure sinners, who do not fear God, are to humble themselves even before this penitent thief.

But after we have felt our sins, what a hard step it is to bring ourselves to *confess* them. Honestly and sincerely to confess one's guilt, how hard is that for flesh and blood. The sinner allows his consciousness

of guilt to devour his spirit internally, he is ready to submit to all the acuteness and misery of that feeling, before he will consent to fall down before God, and confess to him his sin. Nor is this strange, for before a man can so much as come into the presence of his God with the confession of sin upon his lips, he must first have faith. For to come into the presence of God is to pray, and how many are there who feel the thorn of conscience keenly, and who yet cannot pray! And even when all this is done, what a hard step remains to be taken before we can confess before *men*, what our actions really have deserved. You have sat in judgment upon your sins, and have pronounced a sentence of condemnation over them before God, in the secret of your closet; you feel that this is much, and you would rather go no further; you would prefer to retain some importance in the eyes of your fellow-men, in the world without. Humble yourselves before this malefactor, for behold, here, before the open heaven above and the listening earth beneath, he cries, "We receive the due reward of our deeds!" Or, is it that you regard this confession as of small value, because it proceeded from the scaffold and was made by a man over whose head earthly justice was even then wielding her arm, preparing to strike the fatal blow? But do you not know to what a depth of degradation a man may fall, and yet all the while appear, in his own estimation, guiltless and good? And has not even the unconverted criminal on the scaffold something plausible about him, if not before the eye that seeth in secret, still in the eyes of his

fellow-men? To pronounce in any case, with full certainty, that the criminal, whose head falls beneath the axe of the executioner, is a greater sinner than I, is indeed a most responsible task, and one which no man who knows his own heart will ever undertake. Do you know with certainty, that among all the wicked deeds and the evil thoughts of your life, which lie unveiled only before that eye which seeth in secret, there is not one which, weighed in the balance of eternal justice, would not be found more heavy than that sin for which that criminal sheds his blood? Now look further, at a fact, which most infallibly demonstrates that this confession of the penitent thief was a confession wrung from his inmost heart. It is only, as I before remarked, when we are ready in our inmost heart to bear the penalty of our sins, that we can be said truly to be sensible of our guilt. When the heart truly repents, it must also with sincerity acknowledge the right God has to use the rod. And this is the test by which it may be known, whether your confession is a matter of mere words or not. "*We receive the due reward of our deeds,*" cried the thief on the cross. His back had been torn with scourges, his body hung stretched upon the cross, and blood fell from his hands and feet; still he could say, "*We receive the due reward of our deeds.*" This is to repent, not merely with the lips, but in the very depths of a man's being; this is to repent when the penitent feels that punishment itself is sweet, because he is so deeply sensible of *what sin deserves*. Ay, and if even the very flames of eternal fire had con-

sumed him, I think a sinner like this, who, when subjected to the fierce pain and agony of the cross, could utter such words as these, would even in these flames have exclaimed, "Judge, I have received my due." And therefore I say to all of you, who confess yourselves to be debtors before God, and who, notwithstanding, at every stroke of the rod, exclaim, "Lord, wherefore this to *me*?"—humble yourself, I say, in the presence of the crucified thief, for your repentance has not yet like his penetrated into the remotest depths of your soul.

Thus his *penitence* humbles us. Further, we have ground deeply to humble ourselves, in the contemplation of his *faith*. "*But this man hath done nothing amiss.*" In these words he acknowledges, in the first instance, the holy innocence of Christ, and he does so before the world. And whence did he know that Christ was innocent? He had neither heard him speak, nor seen him work; he had seen nothing of him but his sufferings. How then did he know that of which the thousands who were raging round the cross knew nothing? Was he, then, able to recognize in the features of that countenance crowned with thorns, which was bleeding by him, the holy soul that was still reflected there? And did he not let himself be deceived, when those thousands, with the priests at their head, cried, "*This man hath blasphemed God, and is worthy of death?*" Truly we must humble ourselves in this man's presence, although he was a malefactor; for how many of you, I ask, would have thus recognized the Holy One of God in the form of

a servant and in the deepest abasement. May we not say, there is a certain nobility of soul manifested in the fact, that in the innocence of these sufferings he discerns the innocence of the whole life which preceded them? Already in this his faith is great; but there is more than this. He believes not merely in the holy innocence of Christ; no, in that brow crowned with thorns, and covered with blood—in that head laden with insult and with shame, with the eye of faith he sees a royal majesty—the majesty of a King, who in his pierced hand yet holds the keys of paradise: “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.” See here what a true faith means. Faith is the wing of the soul, by which she wings her way far above and beyond what is seen, into the regions of the invisible. Faith is the eye of the soul, which sees majesty where the eye of the flesh sees only shame—which sees light where the other sees only darkness—which recognizes life where the other perceives only death—and which in him, who, to the eye of flesh is nothing more than a condemned malefactor, owns and worships the King of heaven.

Such is the eye of faith, and that eye of faith the dying thief possessed. Brethren, would not penitence and faith like these make that man precious in the sight of God? Thus to repent, and thus to believe, is no vain idea; it is a power of God, such as is capable of creating a new man, of which it may with truth be said, “Old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.” For the new birth is

nothing else than thus to repent and thus to believe. Yes, a child was born there into the kingdom of God—the gloomy cross was his cradle—and the great, wide eternity became the scene of his expansion and his growth. The spring of the new life which was then poured into his soul, shall be throughout eternity a well of living water springing up into everlasting life.

A dying thief to life is born,  
His cross a cradle proves:  
So mighty ev'n in death His grace  
Who dearly sinners loves.

For He now hanging by his side  
Is sovereign of the skies;  
For him the Crucified unlocks  
The gates of paradise.

See, all around the tree of shame,  
Attendant angels *wait*,  
To bear to heaven that ransomed soul,  
Returned to God so late.

That through eternal years of bliss,  
In the light of God on high,  
His new-born spirit may expand  
Beneath his Saviour's eye.

In this instance of the deliverance of a sinner in the eleventh hour, is it intended to lull to sleep the careless and the secure? Is it recorded in order to administer the balm of consolation to those who indulge in the idle dream that, after they have tasted all the joys that life can give, they will be reconciled to their God with the last sigh of their vicious breast? It might be so if, in the case before us, there was nothing more

than the last sigh of a vicious breast. But here there is something more; there is a new heart here, a new birth. And if you would first take your pleasure in the world, and afterwards make your peace with God—if you can with certainty know that, in the last evening twilight of your days, that lies between the noon-day glare and glitter of your worldly life and the stern night of judgment that is to ensue, you will even then, by a similar penitence and faith, become new men—then you may go on in sin, and live your fleeting life between heaven and earth with as much unconcern as if there were no death at its close! But I testify to you that he who, when the words, “To-day, to-day if ye will hear my voice!” sound in his ear, *will not hear*, will never more be able to repent and believe, even if he would. That insolent levity which purposely puts off the day of repentance, think you that it can repent when it chooses? It cannot; for every conscious and intentional delay is a barrier in the way of repentance; and the more barriers there are in the way, the more certainly is an hour approaching when it shall be said, *It is too late!*

This day, this very day, God has called you. Ye proud spirits, ye hearts in carnal security, this day God hath called you. Let whoever hears his voice humble himself before him now; for every delay is a barrier in the way of repentance; and the more barriers in the way, the more certainly is an hour approaching when it shall be said, *It is too late!*

O Lord, we would fain be where thou art, where thou art now with the penitent thief; and as we know

not how soon our last hour may come, and whether then, in the death-struggles of the parting spirit, there will be a gate of mercy thrown open to us, help us to repent, help us to believe, before that last hour draws near! Amen.

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## SERMON X.

THE FILIAL LOVE OF JESUS: "JESUS SAITH UNTO HIS MOTHER, WOMAN, BEHOLD THY SON! THEN SAITH HE TO THE DISCIPLE, BEHOLD THY MOEHER!"

JOHN xix. 25-27.—Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.

BELOVED in Christ:—You have listened to a word of *forgiveness* from the mouth of your Saviour, and have heard him speak as a priest; you have listened to a word of *majesty*, when he opened from the cross the gate of paradise, and there heard him speak as a king; listen to-day to a word of *love* which he spoke as a human son to a human mother. Some time might have elapsed since he had uttered these royal words about his kingdom of paradise, when, looking down, his eye fell upon the women and the disciple whom he loved, standing by. They had—the former doubtless, protected by their sex, and the latter as a

friend of the high-priest—succeeded in gaining access to the cross, near enough to hear the words of their dying Lord. It was for those loving spirits, but especially for the mother's, a proximity most dear and valued; but, at the same time, most painful. Then it was, truly, that that mother's heart was to experience the fulfilment of the word of prophecy, which had been spoken to her some three and thirty years before, in the days when she could yet press to her bosom the smiling countenance of the infant Redeemer. The aged Simeon had foretold to her, "A sword shall pierce through thine own soul also." Ah! now, indeed, a sword pierced her soul, as she saw the Son of so many joys and so many sorrows hang drooping and dying on the cross. His arms were stretched out, and none could relieve their pain; his lips were parched, and none could refresh them; his wounds were bleeding, but none of those he loved could draw near to bind them up. Then it was that the filial love of Jesus was displayed, and it is this that will this day form the subject of our discourse. Listen to the words of our text in John xix. 25-27: "*Now there stood by the cross of Jesus, his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*"

Is it possible to read these words without exclaim-

ing, What a touching incident is here recorded of our Lord! and what a powerful lesson it teaches us! Let us lay to heart both these considerations.

What a *touching incident of our Lord!* How surprising is the strength of filial love in our Lord which it displays, how great the tenderness of that love. How surprising is its strength! One cannot easily realize to one's self, that the heart of this Son of God beat so truly to his earthly mother, as the hearts of the other children of men are wont to beat. Thou only-begotten Son of God, who didst lie in the bosom of thy Heavenly Father, can it be that the breast of thy earthly mother had for thee the significance it has for other poor children of earth? In all other respects, at least, he was ever so free from the influence of earthly ties. No conjugal bonds were there to fetter him; no heart that could claim him as exclusively its own, and could say to him, *Thou art mine.* No children, except those born of his Spirit, could stretch out their hands to him. And all his natural relationships were in him made so entirely subordinate to the spiritual. The man who would first bury his father before following him, received the command, "Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God." Once, when a certain mother, overcome by the power of his discourse, burst into the exclamation, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the breasts that gave thee suck," he answered, "*Rather*, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it." "Who is my father and my mother? Whosoever doeth the will of my Father in heaven."

After all this, one is surprised at the exhibition of his filial love which meets us here, showing how sacredly he regarded those fleshly ties which he had. That in such moments as these he should have thought of his earthly mother! Think what sufferings body and spirit were in these moments undergoing. The wounds on his lacerated back were still smarting with pain, and blood flowed from the marks of the nails and the thorny crown; from his extended limbs, the blood was driven back upon the oppressed heart, and his parched tongue was cleaving to the roof of his mouth. And yet, under similar physical sufferings, other men have thought of the ties of nature. Therefore, what surprises us is, not that amid the burning of his wounds and the anguish of his broken heart, he should not have thought exclusively on himself, but also on her that bore him. And then, from first to last, *his* love was a self-forgetting love, even upon the cross; his love was to the very last a Saviour's love. Instead of thinking of his own sufferings, he thought of the guilt of others. But what is surprising to us, what reveals to us the depth of his filial love, is this, that after he had been filled with thoughts suitable to his character as a Saviour, after he had prayed for *his* people as a merciful high-priest, and, as a king, had opened paradise to a penitent sinner, he now—all priestly and kingly thoughts apart—feels as a son, and provides for his weeping mother, and opens to her his heart. Yes, that *does* surprise us, and discloses to us how strong his love to his mother was; it brings him, as man, so near to us. Mark, at the same time,

the *tenderness* of that love. The dying Son makes his will for his mother. What possession will he leave her? What of earthly goods he could call his own was at any time but little, and even that little was his now no longer; at his death it became the property of the men who carried into execution the sentence of death, and they had even then been casting lots over it beneath his cross. Yet, had he wished to bequeath to her money or property, he might easily have done so, for all that his followers, such as Mary and Martha, Salome, or Peter, had, he might truly have called his own; they who had given themselves to him, had they not also willingly placed at his disposal all that they possessed? But he will not leave her goods or wealth; he has no silver and gold, but such as he has he will leave her, and he has something more precious than gold or silver. He will bequeath to her a heart, the human heart which is next his own; and wherefore is that heart next his own? because it best understands what love is. See here another proof that John well knew the nature of love. How short is the "Saviour's testament!" "Woman, behold thy son—behold thy mother." John requires no more than this, Mary requires no more, "Woman, behold thy son—behold thy mother," and with this a glance of mutual understanding passes between the two, and they are satisfied. The son understands the mother, the mother understands the son. May we not conclude from this, that those two hearts were well suited to each other; and does not the idea make us feel that the love of the dying Son was as tender as it was strong? Doubt-

less, in this the Saviour was making provision for Mary's earthly wants. The father of John cannot have been a poor man; we read of his having hired servants in his pay; he possessed a house of his own at Bethsaida; possibly also one in Jerusalem, for we read, "from that hour he took her unto his own home," which we know was from this time forward in Jerusalem. And thus the disciple maintained her, provided for her; and thus he watched over her when she came to lie upon her last bed of sickness. A tradition relates, that John would never forsake the dear trust which his dying Saviour had committed to his care, that accordingly he never went beyond the boundaries of Palestine, until the mother of the Lord, had, in his arms, breathed her last. But it was not surely for the sake of this earthly support and care alone, that Jesus confided his mother to the disciple whom he loved. Had his intention been only to make provision for those, he could equally well have left her to the care of her natural protectors, to his four brothers and his sisters. True, the brothers were not at that time believers, but they were soon to become so, and on the morning of the very next Sabbath-day, the bud of their faith would come to the blossom. We read in Paul, that the risen Lord once appeared alone to his brother James. (1 Cor. xv. 7.) What passed between these two, on that occasion, we are not informed; but certain it is, that must have been a turning-point in the life of the brother, for we subsequently find him, along with his brethren, in company with the apostles. Why then, if it was only

her physical comfort that he thought of, did the Lord not commit his mother to the care of James? Because he wished to leave her a heart that could perfectly understand her; and you need not be informed that relations, even believing relations, are not always those who can best do this. I have formerly shown you, from the Bible, of what a tender virgin spirit the mother of our Lord was. And on this account she needed a tender spirit to understand her. Now, could the Lord have pointed to one among them all of a nature more tender than was his, who was called in the ancient church, by preëminence, the man of virgin-soul? Beneath the cross, one single glance sufficed to show that they understood each other, and doubtless from that time they went on knowing each other ever better. Moreover, this disciple was best qualified to tend and nourish the spiritual life of the mother of the Lord. In a word, could the dying Redeemer have provided for his mother with greater tenderness, with more thoughtful love, than when he wished that she should rest her grey hairs on that breast which had often leant on his own!

Yes, it is a touching incident here recorded of our Lord; and at the same time *it reads a most humbling lesson to us*. Do you understand, beloved, what in these words the dying Son of God and of Man proclaims to us from the cross? Little children, so he addresses us, be strong in your love to your relations, and in your love be forgetful of yourselves! Little children, be strong in your love to your relations, and

in your love be wise to ponder what is most for their good !

*Little children, be strong in your love to your relations, and in your love forget yourselves.* Such is the first command that the Lord addresses to us from the cross in the words of our text. Now, what is it that makes love strong? I answer, it is self-forgetfulness. What makes it weak? I answer, it is balancing and weighing everything, it is measuring everything by rule and square, it is for ever separating and distinguishing between the mine and the thine, it is this that makes love weak. For it is with love just as it is with faith. Whenever faith begins to be suspicious and to inquire, is it so, or is it not? then the power of faith is broken. And whenever love begins to put such questions as, ought I? may I? must I? then the power of love is broken. At any rate a true love, if it take such questions as these into consideration at all, after it has gone through them, and has by them become purified as well as strengthened, has done with them, and is once more an immediate, spontaneous feeling in the breast. The waves of love must flow from the heart clear and strong, as the waves of the stream flow out of the rocky mountain side. Thus spontaneous, unimpeded, *self-forgetting* was the Saviour's love, thus it was even to his last hour of suffering. My brethren, love is at any time strong only then when one can forget himself, in order to think only on the object of his love. The love of that man is feeble who, in loving others, still thinks a great deal about himself, who is always calculating and

making minute distinctions between mine and thine. When at the last supper Christ sat down with his disciples, one might have expected that in the view of the approaching hours of sorrow he would be entirely occupied with his own thoughts. But how different was the case. In that moment all his thought and care were for his own, how he should comfort them, how he should strengthen them, so that even John, who knew his Master so well, is struck with it, and writes with wonder, “Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them *unto the end.*” This self-forgetful love he retained in the darkness of death, ay, even until he bowed his head and gave up the ghost. He knew the rare art well of forgetting his own suffering in the thought of the distress of others. Which of *us* has learned that art? We calculate and distinguish between what is ours and what our neighbour’s. We do so even when God has given us a light and happy heart, while to others he has allotted sorrow, when we could well afford to take upon ourselves part of our neighbour’s burden. But when our own heart is oppressed with sorrow, how few of us would then preserve a heart so large and wide that he could forget himself, and find a place in his sympathy for his neighbour’s affliction? Sorrow-laden Christians, are you sufficiently mindful of the fact, that affliction has a tendency to make people egotistical and self-absorbed? Ye who have a cross of care to bear, do you not perceive, that to be exclusively engrossed with one’s own peculiar grief, narrows the heart so that it becomes incapable of taking up into

its sympathy the woes of others. O be strong in the love of Jesus, and learn to forget your own distress in that of others. At all events, the affliction of your relations, of those who are your own flesh and blood, ought not surely to be foreign to your deepest sympathies; you ought to think of it as your own. Children, how often have your father and mother forgotten their own joy and sorrow in their sympathy with your sorrow; and have you not strength enough to forget yourselves in the sorrow of your parents? Yea, all of you, learn to bury and forget your own griefs and sufferings in the griefs and sufferings of others. You will do so to your own advantage. For he who seeks to bind up the wounds of others, lays in the very act a balm upon his own, and soft and gentle flow the tears of him who himself dries the tears from a brother's eye! Well do those widows know this, and those childless parents who, because they must stand alone in the world, having no one to dry their own eyes, and sooth their own sorrow, have made it the work of their life to minister the balm of consolation to their fellow-men, and wipe away their tears. Christians, there is no nobler way of ridding yourselves of the burden of your sorrow, than by burying and forgetting it in the griefs of others! O thou noble, blessed model of self-forgetting love, thou who art come into the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister; thee will we gaze on, thee will we love, until we learn to love our relations with a love which, in its solicitude for them, forgets its own affliction!

But I go even farther. It was not only his own

sufferings that the Saviour forgot; no, he forgot, if I may so express myself, his own most peculiar work, that work of a Saviour, which concerned the whole world; even in *that* work he paused a moment, that he might dry the tears of his afflicted mother. It is admitted by all, that it is a selfish and egotistical thing for a man to bury and entomb himself in his own sorrow. But there is one point on which it is very easy for people to deceive themselves. Our business and our calling are God's, and when engaged in it, we are doing God's work. How then can we leave off doing God's work to go and minister relief to the afflicted? But people may give themselves too much concern about this very work of God. Have there not been many who have come forward as helpers of others in distress, whose own wives and children were at the very time eating their bread of tears at home?—many who required so much time and strength to discharge their duties as officers, as men of science, as students, that they had none left to fulfil those of their calling as fathers, children, husbands, friends? O, let us never forget it, our very first duty and calling upon earth is this—to become men well pleasing to God. That of which we speak may be done with a good conscience, and, for all that, we must say the good conscience is an erring one. Do we not read, “He that is unrighteous in the least, is unrighteous also in the greatest. If any man provide not for his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel”? If he, who had the greatest of all works to do upon the earth, if the Saviour in the hour of death, when he

bore upon his heart the sins of a world, if even he, while he discharged the one awful duty, did not leave undone the other; and if in a heart which the concern of a Saviour for a ruined world oppressed, room was yet found for the concern of a Son for his weeping mother, O how much more should this be true of us!

And the other command which the Lord addresses to us from the cross is this, Little children, let *your love for your relations be strong in devising what is most for their good.*

Every one, my brethren, has his own particular side from which the road to the heart lies, and by this way he must be approached by any one who wishes to show him some kindness. And therefore it is, that true love is impossible without *going out* of one's self; for if thou livest and hast thy being only in thyself, and not in others, how canst thou discover the particular side from which the way into the heart of others lies. This quality of love by which it enables us to place ourselves in the position of others; which seeks to do good to one in his own way, and not in our own way; which makes us realize his feelings, and anticipate his wishes, this we call, in social life, *delicate attention*; and in no way can one so speedily effect the conquest of the hearts of others, as just by studying them thus, and meeting their desires. Unfortunately, consideration for the feelings of others and attentiveness to their wishes is often factitious and put-on. Often it has no foundation in truth of nature, and is of no longer duration than the social circle of an evening

party; with the extinction of its lights the fair stars of all these beautiful words and kindnesses are extinguished[too]. Alas for the many falsehoods which go to make up our social life! But this falsehood is a reflection, shining back indeed from a burnished and mere earthly metal, of a real virtue; it is the shadow, dark with mere earthly darkness, of that delicate consideration for others which is the root and essence of true politeness. Now, in the words of our Lord which we have before us, do we not find this delicate considerateness of love in its true form, set forth in a manner most attractive, and at the same time to us most reproving? Did we but know how the Saviour was wont to deal with those with whom he held intercourse, with each of his disciples severally, with his mother and the members of his family, we should then see how, by ways adapted to the several cases of each, he went to seek them with his ministering love, how he educated them for himself, how he drew them to himself. And thus it is he deals with men still, as, bending down from heaven, he leads his own and prepares them for himself. "I am the good Shepherd," says Jesus, "and know my sheep." He calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out. Has not the divine power of his doctrine laid hold on each of us from his own peculiar side, and has not the divine beauty of his form disclosed to each a peculiar attraction? Yes, he knows us by name, and he leads us according as the peculiar necessities of each require. Tell me, ye who know him, is it not thus that he has dealt with you?

Beloved in Christ, ye men—ye women—ye youths, he has left us all an example that we should follow his footsteps, an example which, in all our dealings with those we love, we should keep before our eye. Let us love those who belong to us with that considerate and thoughtful love which discovers and provides for every one what is best suited for his peculiar case. We must go more out of ourselves than we do, we must go deeper into the feelings of those with whom God has bound us in the ties of nature, in order that we may learn more fully to understand what each wants, what would give them joy. The apostle says, “Let not every one mind his own things, but each one also the things of others.” We all look too much to our own things, are too much lost in our own sorrows, interests, and wants, and live too little in that which concerns others; hence we understand far too little the men with whom we associate, and it is because we do not properly understand them, that there is so little delicacy and consideration in our love.

Hence it is, moreover, that we do not keep before us as we ought, that benefit which, of all others, is the best and most profitable for them—hence it is, that we leave so much out of account, the wants of their immortal natures. As certain as that word is true, “What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world if he lose his own soul,” so certain is it that no greater blessing can be conferred by any man upon a relation, than when he takes into consideration, and seeks to provide for, his spiritual necessities. And did not on this account the Saviour think, even in death, of the

spiritual necessities of his mother, and in his tender solicitude provide for them?

It is a sign of the tenderness of your love that you should seek at all to supply the spiritual wants of those that belong to you, but further, in doing so, you must act with tenderness. Mere violent declamation, mere sermonizing will not gain your object. At the same time, to sit down with folded arms and idly wait till God converts the heart, will as little avail. In the first place, you must gain over hearts by deeds, before you attempt to win them by words. That is done by tender, ministering love. Beloved, such a tender, ministering, self-forgetful love, a love which goes entirely out of itself, and out *towards* others, such a love has in it something so unearthly, so heavenly, that the heart must be of stone indeed which it fails to touch. Would you that men would lend a willing and attentive ear to your exhortations, O, then, see to it, in the first place, that you succeed in taking possession of their hearts, and making them your own: and a love like this conquers hearts. This is a sermon such as the least eloquent among you may preach, even though he can urge no other testimony in favour of the truth of his cause; by this means many a Christian woman has exercised a greater and a deeper influence in the world on behalf of the kingdom of God, than many settled clergymen. Even that trumpet of God, the apostle Paul, who knew better than any other the power of the preaching of the word, even he made use of this tender ministering love, and by it preached to his churches, for did he

not refuse all their gifts, preferring to carry on a humble trade by night, that during the day he might, without hinderance, make known to them the gospel of Christ? Now, after you have found for yourself a way to the heart, by such works—which are indeed infinitely more difficult than words—you will then find an entrance there for your words also. Tenderness of love is necessary in order to become in one's words all things to all men. Every human heart is a little world, and each is approached by a way of its own. Learn to know those who belong to you, to know them in their deepest and truest nature, in order that you may speak to each of them of the truth in the very way that is best fitted for each. Observe, for example, how Paul writes in an entirely different way to Philemon and to Timotheus, to the Galatians and the Philippians. “I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice as ye stand in need,” he writes to the Galatians. Just because every human heart is a little world of its own, and has its own door of entrance, it is not enough for us to preach from the pulpit, where if *one* word strikes a heart, a hundred others fall unheeded; we must follow the example of Paul, who, when he parted from the Church at Ephesus, declared, “I have kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house.” O, if the example of a Paul has any weight with you, if the pattern of love which your Saviour, even in the hour of his death, presents, has any influence over you, make it your work, I beseech you, fathers, chil-

dren, mothers, brothers and sisters, friends, make it your earnest work, to understand those you love in their deepest and truest nature, in order that you may love them with a true love, in order that you may be able to bring to them in tender love, that gift which is of more value than any other—the gift of their eternal salvation.

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## SERMON XI.

ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI? MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?

MATTHEW xxvii. 45, 46.—Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

CHRISTIANS, you have heard how the Son of God made intercession upon the cross as High-priest; you have seen him, as King of the kingdom of God, open the gate of paradise to the penitent sinner; and you have heard how, even in the hour of death, the Son of man was not unmindful of his earthly mother. These four sayings, all of them expressive of the Saviour's concern for others, have been uttered. No voice is now heard from the cross. All is still, save the raging of the billows of hate and scorn beneath. Thus three hours, from the ninth hour to the twelfth, have passed in silence, and now another voice is

heard. And this time it is the Lord of nature, not the patient sufferer on the cross, that opens his mouth, and it is in actions that he speaks. Darkness spreads out its gloomy wing over the scene where that work of deepest darkness is going on. The darkness went on increasing, till the third hour; and then it was that the crucified spoke once more. Ah! what intense darkness must at that moment have wrapt his soul, for never had these sacred lips uttered words so gloomy! We read in Matthew xxvii. 45, 46: "*Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*"

How heavily must the darkness of death have rested upon that holy soul, to have extorted from it such words as these in an hour like that! You will not be able to understand them, unless you bear in mind the truth which our former meditations have taught us, namely, that Jesus felt the sin of man far more intensely than any of us can feel it. Our loving fellow-feeling for the sinner is too weak, our sympathy with the holiness of God is too cold. I have already invited you to contemplate the Saviour as he stood upon the heights before the city, and tears fell from his eyes, as he thought of the guilt his people were so shortly to incur. We have been with him in Gethsemane when, in anticipation of the final conflict, he wrestled with God, until "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood." You have heard how, as

groaning beneath the burden of the cross, he went to the place of execution, he could even then exclaim, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves.” And now, when God was himself as it were intimating to the workers of iniquity the judgments which were to come upon them, as, over those thousands of men, rejoicing in iniquity and in malice, nature spread her sombre morning-garb, the darkness ever becoming more mighty and more awful—O, during those three last hours, when all without was silent, how acute must the mental sufferings of Jesus have been! Think, too, of his physical sufferings:—the mid-day sultriness would make his wounds smart more fiercely, and rack the out-stretched limbs more cruelly, and drive the blood more furiously back upon the broken heart! But fiercely as his wounds may burn, the thought of his people’s sins is harder still to bear, and anxiously as his heart may beat at the nearness of the death-struggle, his soul shrinks yet more convulsively from the thought of the judgments which these sins are bringing in their train.—But he turns his eye back to the times of old: what the Royal Son of David is enduring, was suffered typically by his royal ancestor. Had not David prefigured the sufferings of the Messias when he cried, “I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death”? And did he not also anticipate the glorification of his great Descendant, when, in the

close of that same twenty-second Psalm, he joyfully exclaimed, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.” Hence it is the opening words of this psalm, of which the Lord makes choice in giving expression to the conflict of his heart: “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”

Consider these words—first, what they are in the mouth of Jesus. They are an *acknowledgment full of confidence*; a *question full of awfulness*; and a *lamentation full of horror*. Then consider what they are to us: an *accusation well fitted to humble us*; a *consolation full of immeasurable grace*.

My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me! What do we understand by these words? First, in the words “My God, my God,” there is an *acknowledgment full of confidence*. To be able to say to that great Spirit from whom, and by whom, and to whom are all things—not with mere words but in true faith—thou art my God, to be able to say that at any time, was much, but to say it upon the tree of shame and at the close of such a life, was unspeakably more. For surely everything appeared to say that that God, the God of his youth, to whom, as a boy of twelve years of age, he had looked up as to his Father, to whom as a man he had trustingly prayed during the battle of his life, surely now everything appeared to say that that God was *his God* no

longer. If you will but look for a moment with an unbelieving eye from the cross, back upon the course of that short life that now lay behind him:—a prophetic dawn of millenniums in duration had preceded him; John the Baptist had been, as it were, the morning red announcing the nearness of his advent; and when at length the fulness of time was come, did he not go forth in the days of his manly vigour as a bridegroom to woo his bride? How he went out in search of that bride—how he followed her among the rocky mountains, and in the lonely wilderness—how he sought her with so many beauteous works, and gracious words, at the cost of so many toils and labours, to win her heart to himself! And what is now the result of it all? Instead of their heart, they have given him a cross; instead of their hand, a thorny crown; instead of their love, a cup of gall; and beneath the cross there is not so much as one voice to lay down the testimony: the man who hangs there is He whom my soul loveth—no, there is not so much as one! Can it then be, O Jesus, that that God who allows thy sun to set so gloomily when it has scarcely risen, that God who at the end of such a life nails thee to a cross of shame, can it be that he is thy God? But, despite the tempter's insinuation, Jesus exclaims, *My God, my God!*

But undoubtedly there is a question here, and it is an awful question! Jesus asks *why?* This is at any time a fearful word, when it is the creature that uses it to his Creator. Jesus asks *why?* Once in the stormy passages of my life, when the weight of my

burden of grief was too great for my shoulders to bear, I raised this why. When my own being and the being of all men appeared to me nothing more than a sad, insoluble problem, I cried out, Why, Lord! And then it was thou, Jesus, who gavest me an answer to my question—an answer so gracious and so sweet, that all my doubtings were set at rest; it was thou who saidst to the stormy questionings of my heart regarding the providence of God, Peace be still! And can it be that now thou thyself turnest with a doubtful “Why” to that black sky above thee? O Jesus, in that “Why” of thine I feel all my questionings, all my doubtings, rising once more loud and clamorous within my heart; I feel all my old wounds opening and bleeding afresh. If Jesus doubts, who shall believe? O most fearful “Why” beneath that darkened heaven, that dost ascend like a pillar of smoke, with which all the peace and all the happiness of my heart ascend!—But no, no; it is not so. For how could he have called God twice *His* God—and he surely knew well what was involved in that—if such was the meaning of that “Why?” It is not to be conceived that this “Why” expressed the dark questioning of a heart which had separated itself from God. Did he not thereafter, with the words, “It is finished”—in which there is implied the consciousness that the problem of his life was solved—terminate, with clear consciousness, all his grief and all his pain? how then can this “Wherefore” be the question of one who knows not the reason of his sufferings? And did not the midnight sky above him

announce that his God had *not* forsaken him? For those dark clouds were not merely the voice of God to the hardened people. To them, indeed, they spoke. And what they said was, “Do not deceive yourselves; I suffer not my beloved Son to die the death of a malefactor unavenged.” But to Jesus too they spoke, and their voice to him was a second time, “I have glorified my name, and will glorify it again.” No; that “why” is manifestly not one which requires or expects its answer from heaven; it has its answer already in *the depths of his own heart*. Not as a question addressed to God is it to be regarded, but as a question addressed to his own heart, which even in the oppression of death was conscious of the great end of his life and sufferings. As in Gethsemane, “Father, is it possible?” is followed immediately by, “Not my will but thine be done;” so doubtless the answer to *this* question too was given in his heart along with it, to his own consolation. And on the whole, we are not so much to view these words as a question on the part of our Lord, but rather as a *cry of lamentation*, similar to those expressions which occur in that psalm of lamentation, as for instance, “Why is my heart disquieted within me?” “Why art thou so far from me?” “Wherefore hidest thou thy face?”

It is a cry of lamentation, a *lamentation full of horror*, as is shown by the words which follow, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” Forsaken—is there a sadder word in human speech than this? Forsaken—even when it is only said of being forsaken by men, or, when it is said of one that he is forsaken by his father

and his mother, how sad, how desolate is the sound! But here we read of being forsaken by God! Jesus is forsaken of God! O dreary lamentation of my Lord, what dost thou disclose to me? But, ye who love him, be not discouraged at the sound. He is not forsaken of his God, of whom even in death he calls *his* God; but he *feels* himself forsaken of his God, inasmuch as everything which otherwise the nearness of God to his people implies—assistance and relief, peace, joy—is at this moment far from the soul of Jesus. It was because at that moment the anguish of his spirit was stronger than the sense of the nearness of his God that he cried, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” The man who in lively faith can say to God, “My God,” has heaven in his heart. But now, although Jesus can still call God his God, yet behold, the midnight blackness of the sky above him, has brought with it night around the heaven of his heart! Let me now speak of the *causes* of this sense of God-forsakenness. First, these words of Jesus are expressive of the anguish of a *human heart* under the agonies of the cross; the sufferings of a man in close and in solitary conflict with death. Those of you who have seen a human being struggling in the arms of death, know how severe that conflict is. He who has never stood by the death-bed of a beloved friend, and there seen life in stern fight with death, and has never witnessed the pains and agonies of dissolving nature; he who has never stood there and watched the slow but irresistible progress of the enemy of man, his advance marked by increasing weakness

and distress; he who has never seen one dear to him wrestling with death—O, he can form no idea of the Saviour's conflict in that weary hour! What a bitter thing is death! And yet how much easier is it for us sinners to die, than it was for that Holy One. We breathe our last upon an easy couch; beside us stands the minister of God with the holy sacrament, the sign and seal of grace; around us are those we love, hearts to contend along with us, to pray for us, hands to wipe from the brow the dews of death, and gently close the eye. Thus we sinners die, and there the holy Jesus struggles alone with death—alone, suspended in mid-air between earth and heaven. His couch is the tree of torture; instead of tears, and the sweet sympathy of friends, he hears nothing but the scoffing of the crowd beneath his cross; instead of hands to close his dying eye, there is a spear to pierce his side! Yes, behold him! It is he into whose hands the Father has committed all things in heaven and on earth. He who, as he hung there upon the accursed tree, the rejected of his people, and the object of their mockery, knew all along that he was come from God and went to God! Consider all this, and then you will have some idea of the anguish that those words express, “Why hast thou forsaken me?” When *we* die, we do but pay the penalty of our sin, and this debt we *must* discharge; but he who died as a malefactor upon Calvary, fought that fight of death, drank that cup of gall freely, out of sovereign love!

Bound upon the accursed tree,  
Faint and bleeding, who is He?”

By the eyes so pale and dim,  
Streaming blood and writhing limb;  
By the flesh with scourges torn;  
By the crown of twisted thorn;  
By the baffled, burning thirst;  
By the drooping, death-dewed brow—  
Son of Man? 'tis Thou! 'tis Thou!

And yet it cannot have been the pain of death alone that uttered its voice in that dreary cry. If, when he was well nigh fainting beneath the weight of the cross, he could still say to those who were lamenting for him, "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves;" if even then he was less moved by his own sufferings than by the thought of what was the occasion of these sufferings, we may be certain that this was also the case when he uttered that cry. And, indeed, I may ask, Did it ever happen that a benefactor perished amid the derision of those whom, even in dying, he blessed; or that a king expired amid the insults of his subjects; or a father amid the mockery of his children—were such acts of atrocity ever committed, without its being the case, that such scorn pierced more deeply, and stung more keenly, than all the pains with which death assailed the dying? Can we then come to any other conclusion, than that a wound more severe than any that death could inflict upon Jesus was that which was caused by the mockery and scorn of the men beneath his cross? This is the keenest sting in all his sorrows, this is the chief cause of the cry of lamentation, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Men and brethren, feel it to be such! You may stand by the cross of Jesus

and be deeply moved by the intensity of the grief which weighed upon the divine sufferer. In this you do well, for he loves your tears of sympathy. But there are other tears which he loves still more, and those are the tears of penitence. And thus those awful words, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani," have also a momentous lesson for us. Lay, then, to heart what they contain more nearly concerning us. They contain, in the first place, an *accusation well fitted to humble us.*

True it is, *we* did not bring him to the place of execution where he breathed out his holy soul, we did not bind the scourges that smote his bleeding back, we did not erect the cross upon which he groaned Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani; personally *we* did nothing of all this, but mankind did it, and therefore every human being is called upon to weep. O what a humiliation is it for man, who prides himself upon his divine origin, to think that, when He, who bore upon every feature of his countenance, who disclosed in every word of his mouth, his heavenly birth, came into this world of ours, he should have been so deeply ignored! Yes, we are the children of a divine Father—but ah, to what an extent must man have forgotten his celestial origin, before he could cause him who was the express image of that Father's person, God manifest in the flesh, to die the death of a malefactor! Consider this, ye well-meaning friends of humanity, ye impassioned poets, ye eloquent orators! Ye are wont to declaim about the divine origin of the species, but, above all the tumult of your eloquence and *your exult-*

tation, rises in silent and stern reality the black cross of Golgotha, and humility is the lesson which its voiceless awfulness proclaims! O youth, full of dreams, and frenzied with enthusiasm, which revellest in thy high ideals of science and of art—the cross of Golgotha stands out above thy dreams, and tells thee of an alienation of man from God, which in thee and in all men must be destroyed, if thy high ideals are ever to become anything but dreams. Not for him, O, not for him, was the tree on which he bled, a tree of shame and infamy, but for us. In these days in which we live, mankind, intoxicated with the progress of modern times in the arts and sciences, is wont to pride itself more than ever on its noble origin, its royal descent, and therefore, especially in these days, the preachers of the gospel of the cross must everywhere let their voice be heard, must everywhere ask, if at the same time men really are progressing in love to God—in humility—in penitence—in faith—in self-denial? And if you cannot give this question a joyous affirmative response, then the preacher of the truth incurs no blame, when he designates all this rejoicing over the progress of man by the name of one of the splendid lies of the age, by which men are cheating themselves of the highest of all blessings, ay, of the one thing needful. Mortals, lay aside those high ideas with which you do but flatter your own foolish vanity. Here stands the cross of Golgotha, it brings against you an accusation which well may humble your pride; and at the same time it points out, sternly and solemnly, that

path of progress which, better than all other ways, men would do well to tread. Yes, we are a royal, a heavenly race, and the Holy Scriptures hold up to us our family tree; it is inscribed, moreover, on the tables of our heart. But now in their fallen state the King's children will nevermore attain to the sceptre they have lost, until they stand as beggars before the throne of God, and humbly confess from what a height they fell.

To those, on the other hand, who have brought themselves to sit down with bowed head and streaming eye at the cross of Golgotha; who would advance—O so readily—upon the way which leads to God, but feel that they still lag behind, to them I preach the cross of Jesus and his cry, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” as a ground of *consolation full of immeasurable grace*. For the blood which was shed there was the blood of the new covenant shed for many for the remission of sins. A new covenant has been established, and this time it is not by works of righteousness that we have done, but according to his mercy that he saves us. The way to heaven lies no longer upwards from beneath, but downwards from above. Believers, the cross is no longer a cross to you, to you it is no more a tree of shame. The apostle has called it a throne of grace, a throne which God himself has set up in order to dispense to all who believe, the righteousness which is well pleasing in his sight. The chastisement of our peace was laid upon him. Beloved, does the majesty of God appear anywhere in a more over-

whelming and wonderful way in the eyes of men, than in that scheme of salvation in which he transforms the very evil of man into a means and an instrument of bringing to light his purposes of grace. You remember on that last evening, how the soul of the holy Jesus shuddered with horror, as long as Judas, the son of perdition was present; and that horror was caused by the thought of what the deed he was going to perpetrate would involve for him. But scarce had the traitor received the sop, and gone out into the night, than his spirit, rejoicing in the thought of what the divine counsel was to bring out of this work of darkness for the eternal blessedness of man, broke out in the exulting words, “Now is the Son of Man glorified.” There is nothing fitted to move men more deeply, nothing that can more strongly impress them with a sense of the majesty of God, than the miracle of grace by which the cross—for man the memorial of the basest ignominy—is converted into a throne of mercy, and every cry of anguish that the Saviour uttered, changed into a source of consolation full of immeasurable grace. The chastisement was upon him in order that *we* might be healed.

Wherefore, then, dost thou faint, why art thou dis-  
couraged? If thy sins oppress thee, know that Jesus  
hath borne them all. And now there is no more suf-  
fering, no more penance to undergo on account of sin,  
nothing but the fellowship of our souls with his suffer-  
ings. His strong crying and tears, his grief and his  
pain, his “My God, my God,” his “Why,” his for-

saken heart—by faith they have all become ours, ours to make us righteous before him. And thus my Saviour and my God!—

Thus when my sins my weary bosom smart,  
I'll plunge them in thy sorrow's ample tide,  
And 'mid the anguish of my bruised heart,  
I'll refuge seek within thy bleeding side.  
My troubled soul is pacified when I  
Myself forget in Jesus' dying woe;  
And sweetly weeps the penitential eye  
Whose tears with thine, my Saviour, mingled flow.

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## SERMON XII.

ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI? MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?

MATTHEW xxvii. 45, 46.—Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

WE are engaged in meditating upon an exclamation of our Lord, which fills the human breast with a strange, unwonted sense of awe. Christ, the helper of man in all *his* need, he to whom all men cry when *they* are forsaken—he it is who cries, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Surely nature must have been out of joint, and the pillars of the earth must have been dissolved, when such a cry was heard! Surely, even if it had not been recorded, we must have believed that at the sound nature hid her face as ashamed; and

if, when Jesus felt himself forsaken, men did not mourn, nature at least would put on her garb of woe. And so indeed it was. The sun above the cross had laid aside his brightness, when Jesus uttered that cry, and the earth was enveloped in a gloomy pall. If we have already felt strongly that the spectacle presented to us in the cross of Christ is one such as the world never saw before, and will never see again, this feeling comes upon us here with an overwhelming power. You will find the words of our text, as on the last occasion, in Matthew xxvii. 45, 46: "*Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour, Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?*"

Let us endeavour to lay to heart how, in these words, *Jesus identified himself with us in our great guilt; and how we should seek to identify ourselves with him in his great sufferings.*

Observe, *how Jesus identified himself with us in our great guilt.* The words of which our Lord makes use to express his affliction are taken from one of the psalms. In other cases sorrow is wont to speak in its own words. And we must conclude that, if, in this moment of extremest need, the Saviour used not his own words, but a text of the Holy Scriptures, in giving expression to his grief, the text he used must have a very special significance for him, and a very deep import for us. Let us, then, in the first place, direct our attention to a consideration of the reasons why

our Lord connected this psalm so very closely with his own personal experience. Now, in general, of all the books in the Bible, that of the Psalms is the one which furnishes the most fitting utterances of the deepest and most convulsive struggles of the human heart. Luther says of this book, "Nowhere else canst thou find deeper, or more touching words of sadness, than are to be found in the lamentation psalms; there thou mayest look into the heart of the saints, as into death, ay, as hell itself, so darkly is it represented there, from the gloomy view of the wrath of God." Now, perhaps the deepest notes of lamentation that this book contains, which are as sad as perhaps any human lips ever uttered, are to be heard in the twenty-second Psalm. Who does not feel a cold chill pass over his soul, when he reads these mournful words, "I am poured out like water, all my bones are out of joint, my heart is like wax, it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." Who does not, in reading these words, think he is listening to a soul, from whose eyes light and consolation have passed away for ever! Who anticipates that upon such a depth of darkness the sun will ever rise again? And yet all at once the brightness of morning breaks upon its night. Would that the experience—to which some of us can bear testimony—were known to *all* here present, the blessed experience of how the Spirit of God often breaks in upon our most ardent petitions at a throne of grace

with an affirmative answer to our request. Then the words are heard, Dry thine eyes, for thou art answered, and thy prayers have come up with acceptance before God. Thus does the morning-red look forth upon us, from behind the blackest cloud of sorrow. O! what an experience is that of God coming very near to man. The Psalms, which indeed may be said to teach us what praying means, furnish us with many similar examples. And what an impressive instance we have of this in the psalm before us. The soul which, but a moments ago lay, with broken wing, panting upon the ground, now suddenly is seen to rise and soar and sing in the golden light of the sun. Thus from out the darkness of the greatest gloom, the shout of joy breaks forth, in grateful acknowledgment that the prayer has been heard: "Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel—for he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted: neither hath he hid his face from, but when he cried unto him, he heard." And who is not amazed when, in words of winged speech it is announced, that this grief and this joy are to become as it were a banquet at which all kingdoms of the earth and all the poor shall rejoice, the knowledge of which shall extend far beyond the limits of time and space to the most distant generation of the future, and to the utmost bounds of the surface of the earth. "The meek shall eat, and be satisfied. All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him. A seed shall

serve him ; they shall make known the Lord to children's children. They shall come and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born." Beloved in Christ, this scripture is fulfilled in your ears. *We* have heard of that glory into which Christ passed from out his great sufferings, *we* sit at the table which has been prepared beneath his cross for men, *we* are the seed that serve him, *we* declare his name to children's children and to the people that is to be born. Do you understand now why the Lord should have selected just these words when he poured out the grief of his soul ? Is not all prophecy given in order that we may learn that, whatever may occur in God's world, nothing can take place that is not foreseen by him ; and it is so, in order that mortals may be well assured that, even when what happens is most in opposition to all human expectation, it is nevertheless nothing else but what has been decreed long before our calculations, even from eternity, by a wisdom that cannot err. "*As it is written*"—these words the Lord seems always to brandish like a shield, clear and polished, from which all the arrows of doubt glance off. And these words, "*As it is written*," are our shield, too, my brethren ! When in the hour of danger, the disciples fled from their Lord and left him alone with his enemies, Jesus calmly said, "*As it is written*." "*As it is written*"—this word he kept before his mental eye, when a Judas became his betrayer, and when, in company with malefactors, he journeyed to Golgotha. And now as the waves of woe are closing over his head, it is from these words that he draws

consolation. If any one of us, my brethren, could see his conflicts and his pains, his trials and his sorrows, as they are registered in that book which God keeps concerning us all; and could read there, or ever they were realized, "So many days of weeping are decreed to this my child, and so many days of joy, thus often will he be defeated and fall, thus often will he arise and conquer;" O, if any one could but discern the balance in which our powers in one scale are measured against our burdens in the other, how would he thus be armed with new strength! Christians see this indeed to some extent, and hence their resolution, hence their courage in the fight; but it is only with the eye of faith that they see it. The Saviour, on the other hand, could read it with his bodily eye on the page of prophecy that had foretold his sufferings and his glory. You see then how, in this the hour of his bitter suffering, the Saviour went back in spirit to the voices of ancient prophecy, and in its language breathed out the lament of his soul.

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Such was the cry that sounded up the midnight heaven. Even in that hour God was still his God, as is testified by the repeated invocation. Even then was it true, "My Father does not leave me alone;" but the inexhaustible spring of blessedness and joy, which used to well up from that fellowship with the Father, flowed now no more. O my brothers, what is it which wrings from this forsaken heart these deepest tones of sorrow? What crushing burden lies upon his soul, that it should utter so heavy a groan? We

behold the back all furrowed with stripes, the brow pierced with thorns, the parched lips, the bleeding prints of the nails. We see all this, but it does not sufficiently explain the mystery; for we know that many others have suffered all this, who have not poured so sad a plaint as he did. O thou noble Head of that Church which thy blood has redeemed, if thy poor children and members, if a Huss and a Polycarp have stood firm in the agonies of death, strong in fellowship with thee—how is it that thou didst become so faint?

My brethren, we must here bear in mind that we Christians have a very different example of endurance and fortitude in affliction, from that with which the wise men of ancient times present us. They regarded it as the highest triumph over suffering, to be able to say to pain, Thou art *not* pain—despising it, instead of conquering it. Vain, presumptuous self-deception! such as, notwithstanding, may also be discovered in many of us, although we know in the secret of our hearts that the thought is vain. No; the pain of our miserable body, our sicknesses and our wounds, form part of those thorns and thistles, which, since the fall, the earth has brought forth in such plenty to man; and has, moreover, brought forth, in accordance with a divine purpose—so that to despise and forget pain, instead of combatting against it, and triumphing over it, is to fight against the fatherly purposes of God concerning us. Therefore, Christians ought to be sensible to pain, and acknowledge it as that which it is; but you must, at the same time summon up strong

thoughts against it, so that when the waves of affliction rise around you, they may be beaten back, and again rolled into the bed in which they flow. That is what suffering as Christians means. Afflicted Christians! let it not be your ambition to emulate your unbelieving fellow-sufferers in the art of holding back your feelings and restraining them within your breast. No, rather give free expression to the pent-up feelings of your heart; but, at the same time, along with the voice of lamentation, let the prayer of your confidence, and your resignation, be heard. It should therefore no longer surprise us, that our Lord and Saviour should have found the gall so bitter, and that his soul shrank back from it so sensitively; and there is nothing strange in the idea, that in that cry of lamentation, this sense of bodily suffering had also a part.

But supposing this to have been the case, we feel that the sense of physical pain alone does not suffice to account for the greatness of his grief. That external agony which the eye can see, is not enough to explain it, there must have been some invisible burden weighing down his soul, when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" In his lifetime he had never been an object of solicitude to himself; he had never sought his own, but always the things of others. And surely, if, in this his last moment, the only thought that filled his breast, that drew from him this cry, was his own distress, he could no longer have been the same. Could it indeed be, that he who, when he was sinking beneath the cross, exclaimed, "Weep

not *for me*, but for yourselves," wept and lamented now, alone, or chiefly, on account of his own sufferings? He who, upon the cross, as they were piercing his hands and his feet, could forget his own sorrow, and pray for the forgiveness of their sins, can he now have, in his own sorrow, forgotten their guilt? No, if even to the highest of his sufferings, Jesus remained true to himself, then we may, without hesitation, affirm, that in this soul-cry of anguish he thought more on others than on himself, and that his soul was so dark and troubled, more from the consideration of their guilt, than of what he was himself enduring. Consider: He, into whose hands all power is given in heaven and earth, hangs there, between earth and heaven, naked and bleeding, and by the hands of wicked men he has been brought so low. He has waited from hour to hour in the hope that at least one heart in that vast crowd beneath may soften, but he has heard only the voice of mockery, and never a voice of love. And while men pour forth scorn and insult, nature arrays herself in mourning—thus delivering a testimony to the Lord of nature of the enormity of the guilt which men are there incurring, and the blackness of the crime they are there committing. Then does there arise before his soul, as it had never arisen before, the thought of the fearful apostacy of that race, which had been once created to be the children of God! It is a sea of gloom whose waves surround his soul, upon whose surface the denial of a Peter, the treachery of a Judas, the insolence of a Caiaphas, the blasphemy of a malefactor, rise like so many swelling billows. The thought

of his own sorrow falls completely into the background, while that of their guilt stands out prominently before his mental eye; and in the grievous oppression of his spirit he looks for consolation to that word of prophecy, in which, along with the description of his temporal grief, is foretold the eternal glory which should follow, and cries, with the opening words of that prophecy, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yes, verily, God is his God still, as the twice-spoken cry of appropriation proclaims, but that joy of heart, in which at other seasons the nearness of God was made manifest, had for the moment vanished away, in the contemplation of the great guilt of his human brethren.

Jesus! with thy sorrow ne'er  
Other sorrow can compare.  
Who thy dying pangs can see,  
And not melt in sympathy?  
For our lost and guilty race  
Thou hast bled—O wondrous grace?  
Love it is has brought thee low,  
And thy soul with sorrow torn,  
Made thee taste such bitter woe.  
How can I such love return?

Such is the question which he puts, who experiences this love even to his last expiring breath. And this question we put also. And to it I answer, Yes, Christian soul, thou canst, thou must return it, for one love deserves another. As Jesus identified himself with us in our great guilt, so shouldst thou seek to *identify thyself with him in his great sufferings.*

One love deserves another. As he has made thy guilt his guilt, so shalt thou make his sorrow thy sorrow. Soul, the cross of Christ is to become thine altar of penitence. Then for the first time shalt thou learn what true repentance is, when thou dost make the cross of Christ the altar of thy penitence. It is an altar so solemn and so stern, but yet so full of consolation;—dark clouds hang above it, but through the darkness a rainbow shines, the rainbow of a new covenant which God has made with sinners. It is a stern, solemn altar, for the Saviour's cry of lamentation rings above it, as a cry of horror at man's depravity; but it is at the same time full of consolation, for that cry of lamentation is also a proof how strong the love of Christ must have been, to go down after them into so deep an abyss of guilt. Here indeed, at this altar, you will learn true repentance, if you will only identify yourselves with your Saviour in his great sufferings. You may have already experienced sorrow and penitence on account of sin, but they have not sprung from the proper source. Your sin has made you sorry, merely because of the consequences and the judgments which followed in its train; you feared the anger of God, but not your sin. O, is it not all too true—many of you would willingly spend an eternity in the enjoyment of sin, were it not for the bitterness of the feeling it leaves behind it! Yes, there are undoubtedly many here present, who, were they to examine themselves somewhat closely, would have to confess, that they could—O! how readily—retain all their vanity and sensuality, if they could only take

them with them into blessedness, and remain the servants of sin in the realms of glory! But, I ask, is it to love God, when a man only fears his judgments? Woe unto those, who, even in the flames of hell, long to flee the burning pangs of the place of torment, but care not to flee from their sin! God's word cannot lie: the damnation of man does not cease one moment sooner than his love of sin; for by that sin, the worm that gnaws and dies not is ever brought forth anew.

Others among you are sorry for your sin, because you feel that you might be something better than the mere slaves of every passion. You repent of your sin, indeed, but wherefore? Merely because it humbles you in your own eyes. Friends, it is well when a man does not require to be ashamed of himself; but if your only reason for repentance be because you cannot think so highly of yourselves as you would, if you arrange the matter of your sin so entirely with yourself alone, and not with your God; why, then, that only proves that pride, and nothing else, is the source of your repentance. O! with how many tears of penitence does a repentance like this—a repentance carried out so utterly without reference to God—require itself to be repented of? But, when, on the other hand, a heart becomes soft beneath the cross of Christ, O, how earnest; burning, pure, are the tears it weeps! And how bitter, too! For the sufferings, which the Holy One of God endured on account of our sins, teach us in what light they are regarded by God, and open up the deepest fountains of our sorrow. If, when he, who knew no sin, looked

into the abyss of human depravity, all joy passed away, so that he must cry out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" what shall the guilty do? Here, here at the cross of the Lord, and as that cry of his falls upon your ear, learn rightly to understand, what the apostle means when he says, "Know ye not that as many of you as are baptized into Christ, are baptized into his death?" Know ye not that ye are baptized to the end that, in the contemplation of his sufferings and death, your old man may die, and that in his resurrection you may rise again? You would kill the old man within you, but, do with him what you will, he will not die; no, not though you torture and torment him, though you sting and consume him. In one form—in that of idleness, for instance, or of covetousness, or of lust—you have buried him; but see, in the form of pride he stands before you again. No; if he is to die at all, he must die in the death of Christ—in the pain and suffering of dying love must he die. You know of that contest which the gentle sunbeam once waged with the blustering storm, as to which should first succeed in making the traveller put off his cloak, and how the gentle sunbeam proved in the end victorious. You may storm away at your old man, with resolutions and commands, but only the soft ray of the love of Christ can make him die. Yes, Lord, thy death will be the death of the old man in us! "Now if we be dead with Christ," says the apostle, "we believe that we shall also live with him." Yes; we not only believe that, we have experienced it ourselves. Ye

who are dead with Christ, ye have felt how in that death the power of your resurrection lies. In sorrow of itself there is no life; sorrow is infirmity; it is a paralyzing of strength and activity; therefore says the apostle, "The sorrow of the world worketh death." Ye who, till now, have sought to mourn for sin, apart from Christ, have you never experienced what a paralyzing, enfeebling thing such a sorrow is, and how it nowise makes a man stronger to advance on his way. On the contrary, your courage becomes feebler and feebler, while at the same time the sting of conscience becomes more and more awake. How sad does the call to forsake and deny one's self sound, when one loves what one is required to renounce! How hard and disappointing do the words "fight," "combat," "conquer," sound to one who has already encountered many a defeat! How can one make good that which lies behind, when one has not even the assurance of being able to make that which lies before any better? Sorrow without Christ, repentance without Christ, is death. But to repent at the altar of the cross of Christ, that is resurrection, that is life. There is pleasure in every pang into which the thought of love enters, and therefore in every such pang there is strength. One love deserves another! cries the soul, when she has dried her weeping eyes, and goes forth and works. And the work which she then has done, it was for her Lord, and from love to him that she did it. We walk as dying, and behold we live! Daily we die, and daily we celebrate our resurrection from the dead! Our old man

perisheth, but our new man is renewed day by day. Like the other children of men, "we are troubled on every side; but we are not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body." Thus spake Paul, and there are in the Church of the Redeemed many thousands who can re-echo his words. And thus, with us too, the cry of lamentation will end in joy and praise. Lamentation marks the beginning of our way, as it opens the 22d Psalm; but as that psalm concludes with songs of rejoicing, so shall hal-lelujahs mark the triumphant close of our heavenward journey. To thee, O thou faithful Redeemer, be eternal honour and praise, for thou hast descended so far down into the depths of our misery, in order that thou mightest raise us up again with thee.

Alas! in this poor life  
But little I can do,  
To show my love to Him who died  
That I might live anew.

But one thing I will strive  
With patience to attain—  
That Jesus' death and sufferings may  
Still in my heart remain.

## SERMON XIII.

JESUS SAITH, I THIRST.

JOHN xix. 28.—After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

BENEATH the cross of our Lord we have stood listening to the heart-rending cry of lamentation, in which, under that darkened heaven, the deep sorrow of his heart found utterance. We shuddered as we heard the Son of God exclaim, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?” but beneath the cross that cry only called forth renewed mockery and derision. “This man calleth for Elias,” cried the scoffers. By this time the natural life of our Lord was entirely exhausted by the long period of uninterrupted suffering he had undergone. Nearly twenty hours had passed since his body had been refreshed by food; and what hours those had been! Who shall tell the amount of woe which had passed over his soul, from the time when he drank the cup, commemorative of dying love, on to this moment! Gethsemane—the betrayal—the examination before Annas, before Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod, and before Pilate a second time—the way to the cross—the six hours in which he hung between earth and heaven, his bleeding wounds exposed to the heat of the mid-day sun—the death-struggle now beginning, and the agony of his holy soul, so much more hard to bear, as it groaned beneath the load of the guilt of humanity! “My strength is dried up

like a potsher'd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws." These words were now literally fulfilled. You know how much the dying often suffer from thirst. Jesus accordingly allows himself a slight physical refreshment. The words in which this is stated are contained in John xix. 28: "*After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.*"

Let us consider what this cry, uttered by Jesus in such a moment, teaches us of him, and what exhortation it addresses to us. What it teaches us of him: the *helplessness*, the *voluntariness*, and the divine *necessity* of his bitter sorrow. What exhortation it addresses to us: it exhorts us to *resignation even in our greatest need*; to *resoluteness even in the severest trial*; to *humiliation on occasion of even the smallest sins*.

O Christ, who, from love to me didst cry upon the cross, "I thirst," let refreshing waters flow into my soul from that thirst of thine! If you would experience this, look here and behold, *first*, the *helplessness* of the Son of God in his bitter agony. This we see more clearly from this slight incident, than from all that precedes. One might witness a man tortured by cruel tormentors, and subjected to the intensest sufferings of which human nature is susceptible, and yet not think of him as altogether helpless, if only he did not give utterance to a longing for relief. It is not always a sign of true magnanimity, it does not always challenge unbounded admiration, when a martyr suffers in silence; for silence is often nothing more than

the sign of defiance and of pride. It is only when that silence springs from repose in God—when the suffering martyr is peaceful and at rest in him—that it becomes true magnanimity. Now it was this Divine self-possession that reigned in the Saviour's breast. This he preserved all along, from the time when, in the garden of Gethsemane, and amidst his chosen disciples, he allowed the pent-up torrent of his grief, for a brief space, to take its course. This he retained as he stood before Annas, and Caiaphas, and Pilate, and Herod; as he bore his cross; as he fought through the six weary hours. Not once all the while did he call upon man for help; not once, up to that last cry, “Eli! Eli!” did he utter a single complaint in the ears of men: of his sufferings he spoke only to God. And when, at the beginning of his sufferings, they would give him refreshment, and handed to him wine mingled with myrrh, in order thus to deaden the sense of pain, he refused it. But now Jesus asks relief. He, to whom men stretch forth their hands in their time of need, asks relief. And from whom does he seek it? From those who, at that moment, alone could grant him anything—his own executioners—Jesus supplicates his executioners for a draught to mitigate his thirst! Where, I ask, in all the previous history, have we seen a sadder picture of his helplessness than is here presented? O! our hearts can scarce endure to see him brought so low. He whom the heavens obey is at the lowest verge of human want. He whom angels had served in the wilderness, who with five loaves had satisfied five thousand men, cries, “I

thirst!" And yet, what a ray of divine light falls upon this extreme destitution of the Saviour, when we consider, at the same time, with what *voluntariness* he gave himself up to it.

You recollect how, at the very commencement of that night of suffering, when the hand of the fiery disciple seized his sword, and, thrusting at the servant of the high-priest, smote off his ear, Jesus said to him, (Matt. xxvi. 52,) "Put up again thy sword into its place; thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels." Never lose sight, I beseech you, of the fact that he, who there was scourged and spat upon, who here hangs upon the cross, knew then, and knows every moment now, that troops of celestial spirits stand and wait his nod. Yes, in those hands pierced by nails, the unseen sceptre of universal empire rests; in that breast, wrung by mortal agony, there still dwells the consciousness that he is a king, a king who voluntarily submits himself to all the outrage and all the suffering that his rebellious subjects inflict upon him. It was of his own free will, that he, whose word of omnipotence had fed the five thousand in the desert, descended so low as to cry to men, ay, and these men his own executioners too, "I thirst!" And what does this voluntariness indicate? Why does he freely submit to all, not seeking to deliver himself from those waves of tribulation which are closing together over his head? Now if he who endures all this, so spontaneously, holds in his pierced hand the invisible sceptre, if he freely allows himself to be reduced to such extremity, surely

this appears to point us to some sacred, some mysterious necessity, according to which men could not have been redeemed otherwise than by a suffering Saviour, by a Saviour who, in the form of a servant, should descend into the very lowest depths of humiliation.

And thus, this saying of Scripture points us to the *necessity* of his sufferings. He had previously refused to receive the stupifying drug which was given out of mercy to the crucified, in order to render them insensible to the intense agony of the cross. In this he showed that he would drink to the very dregs the bitter cup which his Father had given him. He thereby declared that there was a divine necessity, in accordance with which he must descend into the blackest night of sorrow. He would drink, you see, the whole cup of affliction, and would drink it in the fullest consciousness. Those words, “It is finished,” with which he bowed his head and gave up the ghost, were doubtless spoken with reference to the whole work which, whether by doing or by suffering, he had completed on the earth. It was, however, chiefly of that great crowning act of suffering that he said, “It is finished.” It seems as if in uttering that cry he removes from his lips the bitter cup, after having drained it to the very dregs. Now, this is also expressly said in the words of our text. We read that it was when Jesus *knew that all things were accomplished*, and not before, that he allowed himself that refreshment, and cried, “I thirst!” Herein is expressed, moreover, as we said, the stern necessity of his sufferings. Here, again, that “must” comes in—that stern and inflexible necessity—of

which he had spoken previously, when he said, "So must the Son of Man be lifted up;" and again, after his resurrection, when cross and sufferings were over, when he said, "Must not Christ have suffered these things?" And why must Christ have suffered all these things? The answer is twofold: as *the Propitiation for our sins*, and as *the Pattern of our righteousness*.

As the *Propitiation for our sins*, Christ must suffer these things. Sin demands punishment. This truth is written in the word of God, it is inscribed in our own conscience. In exact proportion to the sin we have committed in our lives, is the punishment which we deserve. There is no making amends for the evil we have done, for every day has its own claims upon us, and allows us no time, even if we had the power, to wash away the guilt of yesterday. Sinners, do not imagine that your weak obedience of to-day can atone for the sins of yesterday. What is done, is done; your committed sins stand out before your conscience, and cannot be destroyed by anything you can do; and thus they stand out also before your God. Yes, they are indestructible, for conscience has a memory in which many things may grow dim, but from which nothing can entirely pass away. In another world, where self-deception is no longer possible, the dim picture of your conscience will be retouched with fresh colouring, and all that has been traced there will come out with fearful distinctness. There will then rise up before the memory of your conscience, your sins of thoughtlessness, your broken vows, the powers you

have thrown away, the seasons of grace you have neglected to improve. There you will recognize all the transgressions and all the omissions of the divine law, which have marked your earthly day, now gone by for ever; and you will feel, with awful power, that these sins were not sins against yourself merely, not merely sins against other men, no, you will then acknowledge that they were sins against God. And what if in that day your only cry is, The past is past; there is no help for it now! Sinners, as your sins stand out before your conscience, so they stand out also before God, and no to-day can wash away the guilt of yesterday! Now it is just because no man can by his weak virtues in the present make atonement for the faults of the past, it is because conscience cannot allow the sin of any man to be forgiven without first being punished, that it was not enough in God merely to proclaim forgiveness of sins, and to announce to men by a decree of Omnipotence, that their iniquities were blotted out for ever. No: something more was necessary. It was necessary that he, who knew no sin, should die the death of the transgressor, in order that in his sufferings guilty men might feel what their sins deserved, and that believing men might find peace of conscience in the fellowship of *his* sufferings. Thoughtless humanity, sin is no trifling matter; it is the violation of a Divine, an eternal law, it is the disturbance of a Divine and sacred order. Therefore no sin can be forgiven thee with regard to which thou dost not feel, that what gives it its sting is this, that it lifts itself up in opposition to

the law of thy God. And therefore can there be no forgiveness for thee, even in Christ, unless thou, as often as thou hast recourse to his grace, dost feel in the fellowship of *his* sufferings, what *thy* sin deserves.

Further, I say, Christ must suffer these things as the *Pattern of our righteousness*. We need a spotless exemplar in all our doing and working, one which shall draw us heavenwards, so often as we are in danger of sinking in the dust and turmoil of life; and we need a spotless, holy exemplar for our hours of suffering. Actions done in a way truly well-pleasing to God are indeed rare, but how much rarer is it to see sufferings endured in a way well-pleasing to him. Indeed, I know not if I may not say, that it is for all of us a much harder thing to suffer according to the will of God, than to act. Might we not all with truth affirm, that it was in our hours of suffering that we first experienced what a want of confidence in God, and what a perverseness against him, dwells in the human heart. And therefore I will cry to the cross of Christ, "Hail, hail, thou cross of my Lord, for it was thou that first didst teach me how men may suffer in a way well-pleasing to God! O thou dear, sacred symbol of Christendom, how hast thou during these well-nigh two thousand years, which have passed since thou wast planted on the earth, how hast thou brought down the powers of heaven to the help of mortals in their hours of affliction. How many a rising storm and whirlwind of the agitated heart has the sight of thee laid to rest? In the chamber of sickness, in the

prison, in the hospital, on the field of battle, how have oil and wine flowed from thee into the wounds of men!" O do not despise the crucifix! It is the sign of suffering and of dying love, and reminds man of that great example who showed him how *he* should suffer and how he should die. Rather let the sacred symbol be hung up in every sick-room, in every hospital, in every prison, that it may there in silence teach men to suffer in a way well-pleasing to God! Thus Christ must have suffered these things to this end also, that in those hours when the heart is most desponding, in the hours of darkness and affliction, we may confide in the fellowship of his sufferings, and that our disobedient heart may find a pattern in his holy obedience.

And therefore shall this word uttered by the Saviour on the cross become to us a word of exhortation. It shall exhort us to *resignation even in our greatest need*, to *resoluteness even in our severest trial*, to *humiliation on occasion of even the smallest sins*.

That word of the Saviour upon the cross, which discloses to us how extreme his helplessness was, should make our hearts resigned and obedient in *our* time of greatest helplessness and need. O my friends, we should all be contented and happy, if we did not enter upon life, making upon it so many unwarrantable claims. We demand of life enjoyment as our right, hence we are not grateful for it when it is given us out of grace; hence, moreover, when God denies it us, our froward heart thinks it is entitled to murmur. Christians, forget not, I beseech you,

that you have come into this life, to the end not that ye might enjoy it, but that in it ye might be trained for another and a better life. Now, you think it a strange thing that days of darkness should ever cross your path; but if you held fast this truth, and bore constantly in mind that you are upon the earth in order to be educated here for heaven, ye would rather expect your present lot to be one of tribulation and suffering, according to those words of Peter, when he says, “Beloved, count it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some *strange thing* happened unto you; but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings.” And, indeed, they alone are true Christians, who are in so close a fellowship with their Saviour, that they do not look for any other treatment in the world than that which he received; even as John writes in his Epistle, “As he was in the world, so are we in the world:” and thus they make up their minds not to expect the favour and approbation of a world, which bestowed only its hatred upon him, or that for them there will be only laughter, where he often wept, or that they will be garlanded with roses, where their Saviour was crowned with thorns. And, indeed, the resignation which they are called to practise is not so difficult for them, for love makes it easy. For love implies also fellowship with the sufferings of the object loved, and thus believers are happy even in tribulation, because they experience in all their sufferings fellowship with their Lord. Jesus willingly descended even into that state of extreme want, of

which we read in the text; Jesus suffered nakedness, hunger, and thirst to pass over him, in order that men, even in circumstances of extreme destitution, might be able to draw consolation amid their trials from the thought of the fellowship of his sufferings. He became poor, in order that the poor might take comfort in the thought that he shared their poverty. He let himself be bound, that the captive might be comforted in fellowship with him. He endured the burning fever, he underwent the agony of death, in order that the sick and the dying might draw their consolation from the thought of fellowship with him. O, how painless do all the thorns of affliction become, when one views them as forming a portion of his crown of thorns; how much more easily is every burden borne, which one regards as part of the cross of Christ; and the fainting soul cries "I thirst" with a less heavy heart, when it knows that it is only echoing back the voice of its dying Saviour! But remember, if we would understand the mystery of the fellowship of his sufferings, it is above all things necessary that we love him, for it is only love that knows how to rejoice in the blessed sympathy of suffering.

Observe, further, how this cry of our Lord exhorts us to *resoluteness in the severest trial*. Until he knew that all things were accomplished, he restrained every expression of his distress. Children of affliction, ye are too feeble! Doubtless, it is human for a man to seek to share his sorrow with one he loves. And, therefore, our Lord himself had an hour when he could say to his faithful disciples, "My soul is sor-

rowful, even unto death," and could ask them to watch and pray with him. But those men were the men of the Saviour's heart, and even *their* sympathy he sought only for one hour. The rest of the time he spoke of his sorrow alone with his God. O beloved, ye make too much of your afflictions in saying so much about them to men, and so little to God. It is because people will not learn to suffer in silence before the Lord, that one trial after another comes to many a soul, without affecting it any more than the stones of the street are affected by the sun and the rain. This is the real cause of our afflictions bearing so little fruit. You must learn to understand the meaning of these words, "Possessing the soul *in quietness before the Lord.*" Do you know what Luther says, "Suffer and be still, tell no man thy sorrow, trust in God, his help will not fail thee." This is what Scripture calls "keeping silence before God." To talk much of one's afflictions to men makes one weak and unmanly; but to tell one's sorrows to him who seeth in secret, makes one strong and calm. Your fire of tribulation is like a flickering flame, which the wind drives to and fro; but do but carry it in secret before the Lord, and it will become a fire of sacrifice which will peacefully ascend to heaven. O that from him, who for six long weary hours upon the cross, was silent before his God, we might learn what it is to keep silence before God in our affliction. We would then be much more able to bear it.

Finally, this saying of Jesus on the cross exhorts

us to *humiliation on occasion of even the smallest sins.* Fellow-Christians, if Christ must have suffered all these things, in order to show us how deeply sin is opposed to the law of God, and what, as sinners, we have deserved, can we any more make light of sin? Formerly, when I knew little about the nature of sin, and thought of it merely as the transgression of a law which I had imposed upon myself, how unmolested did I allow the evil thought to riot in my breast, how lightly did I permit the idle words to flow from my lips, how little did I concern myself about those sins of omission which marked every day of my life! But now, when I behold the cross of Calvary, and hear it proclaim to me, and to all the world, what sin is in the sight of God; when, in the bitter experience of my own corrupt heart, I begin to see what sin is, ah! now it is that conscience awakes from its slumbers; now it is that even my smallest sins burn in my breast. Against thee, O Lord, against thee only have I sinned, do I cry; and the sin which required such an expiation by thee, I shall never more make light of. O Lord Jesus, thy cross shall teach me every day to know the true import of my sin. Yes, I will praise thee, that thou hast purchased an eternal forgiveness for my sins; I will, since I dare, daily supplicate thee for grace upon grace; but never, never, will I draw consolation from grace, without feeling and acknowledging anew, in memory of thy sufferings, what my sins have deserved from thee. Lord Jesus, let thy strength be made perfect in my weakness! Amen.

## SERMON XIV.

## THE DEATH OF JESUS.

JOHN xix. 30.—When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

BELOVED in the Lord:—We shall consider to-day that portion of the sacred narrative which immediately follows the text of our last meditation. The Lord, knowing that all that the Father had given him to suffer was accomplished, had allowed himself the slight refreshment of a little vinegar to cool his parched lips. And now we read, John xix. 30: "*When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*"

"It is finished." Such were the last words of the dying Saviour. And what do these words teach us of him? They teach us that he had accomplished a great, a divine mission; that he had performed a difficult task, and that the end of his work was blessed. As Jesus dies, all is so peaceful and serene in him; and the holy calm which reigns around the parting spirit is transfused to our own soul. So that when, in reading the evangelical narrative, one comes to this passage, a feeling of tranquillity and calm is diffused over one's heart. But the feeling which these words call forth, is not merely a feeling of the repose of Jesus in death; it is also one of the blessed-

ness of his death. It is a blessed thing to die with such an “It is finished” upon the lips. And the question which arises in our minds, as we contemplate such a scene is, In what way can *I* hope to attain a death so blessed? And to this question I will answer: *By ever living in the strong conviction that we too have in life a great, a divine mission to accomplish, and work to perform; by being ever ready to perform that work, to accomplish that mission, even at the expense of the most painful sacrifices, and by deriving strength and consolation from these words of our dying Saviour, “It is finished.”*

That Jesus had a great and divine mission to accomplish, we learn especially from these words, “It is finished.” On what occasion do *we* utter these words? Not when the task we have finished is of small importance, for then we scarcely ourselves mark its completion; but only when we have brought to a termination some great, important work—a work on behalf of which, so long as we were engaged with it, the sympathy and attention of the whole soul were enlisted. Now, *all* the occupations we engage in ought in one sense to be divine, to be of God, for one is our Master, and all we do should be done in his service. But alas! we have often two masters; and, indeed, there are some of whom it may be said, that they have as many masters as they have strong inclinations. In the case of many, what pleasure or fancy dictates, the act obeys. Now Christ never, in any one action of his life, performed his own will. “I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him

that sent me." "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me." Thus the work which he was sensible of having accomplished, when he cried, "It is finished," was also a work of God. And what was that work? In order to answer the question aright, we must bear in mind, that he who in his last moments, as he stands on the boundary which separates this world from the world beyond, exclaims, "It is finished," could not then be thinking of any particular actions of his life. On the contrary, his thoughts would be turned upon that one work to which all others were subordinate, and which formed in a special way *the* work of his life. And Jesus had a life-work to perform. Listen to his words in that passage of the intercessory prayer, where, speaking as one already glorified, he seems to cast a glance over his whole earthly work: "Father, I have glorified thee upon the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world." The business of his life was, thus, to manifest the name of God. A name is that by means of which we designate and characterize ourselves for the sake of others; hence that name is the best selected which gives expression to the most marked and striking feature in the nature of the person named. The name of God had long been inquired after by the nations of the earth. They had applied to the Infinite a thousand names, without ever finding one by which rightly to characterize him. Now Christ has revealed the name of God: he has revealed it by his words and by his

works, in his life and in his sufferings. This was the work which was concluded when he cried, "It is finished." Let us, however, direct our attention to what the Evangelist says a little further back; he tells us that Jesus had cried, "I thirst," "knowing that all things were now accomplished." In this place, the "all things" which had been accomplished before Jesus spoke, refer especially to the work of suffering, as the closing work of his life. Are we then in error when we affirm, that this work of suffering was likewise in the Saviour's view when he said, "It is finished;" nay, that these words chiefly refer to that work of suffering? For, were not his sufferings a revelation of the name of God? Were they not so in a preëminent degree? And may we not, in the dark cloud that hung over the cross, read the bright inscription, "*God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself?*" This, then, was the great, the divine work which Christ had completed when he cried, "It is finished."

And that was a task which could not be accomplished otherwise than at the cost of an incalculable sacrifice. Call to mind the hours of *your* life when you have exclaimed, "It is finished," and you will find that, for the most part, they were occasions in which you had completed at heavy cost some severe task. How often have you cried, "It is finished," in the spirit of the pilgrim who, after a long and arduous journey, at length crosses the threshold of his father's house! The Lord had completed an arduous work. For we must not confine our thoughts to the

last hours of his life, when we speak of the sufferings which his love underwent. The path of affliction which he trod was as long as the course of his mortal life. Think of him in his daily intercourse with the outcast of his people, with publicans and sinners, with hypocrites and adulterers, with lepers and epileptics, with blind and lame. And think at the same time of the loving heart which made the sorrow of all, as well as the guilt of all, its own! That depth of sorrow which ever dwelt in his spirit was but rarely told to human ear—in general he carried it before his Father in heaven; but on one occasion it does break out, when he cries, “O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you!” That cry was wrung from him by the thought of how little *living faith in God* there is among men. See here what a difference there is between you and the holy Jesus! How many are there among you, let me inquire, who feel that, among the many painful circumstances of life, there is nothing so sad as the thought of how little living faith in God there is to be found among one’s brothers and friends, in father, mother, child, or spouse? If, even in the ministry, there are so many who can live contented and at ease, never allowing themselves to be disturbed by an anxious thought, as to whether there is much or little faith in God in their congregation, how can it be otherwise with the people! If even many pastors do not understand that expression which is used of the Saviour, that “he was grieved for the people,” and have no idea of this grief for men that are living without God, how can others be expected to understand and

sympathize in this holy sorrow? Alas! I fear that loving sorrow, which, throughout all his earthly life, the Man of sorrows felt for the woes and wickedness of men, is to many of us a thing quite incomprehensible. Hence we cannot understand how severe the task which he had to perform was. In his lifetime, it could be seen but rarely how severe he felt it; but we see it now in his death; and as he cries, “It is finished,” the soul breathes free, for while feeling how hard it must have been for him, we are at the same time sensible, to some extent, how easy it *now* is.

For the “It is finished,” which marks the close of a great work, and one which has demanded many sacrifices, is always at the same time a *blessed* “It is finished.” The moments in which we have exclaimed “It is finished,” have always had something soothing and satisfactory for us, even when the work which we had brought to completion was one performed in our own service, on our own account. But if one of us have at any time in our life had occasion to exclaim “It is finished,” after some hard, self-denying task undertaken and achieved, not on our own account, but in the loving service of others—surely in such an “It is finished” there is something very blessed. This is the charm of self-sacrificing charity; this the power to bless of ministering love. And he who became poor to make us rich, who came into the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, what did he in his whole life seek or do for himself? Hence, when at the end of his life he cried, “It is finished,” it was a blessed finishing, blessed beyond all measure,

for he then saw in spirit the fruit of his long and arduous work of love, as the prophet had foretold: “Because he has made his soul an offering for sin, he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied—therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong.” (Isaiah liii. 10.) He sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied; and where did he ever find his presence and satisfaction but in giving relief to the wretched, and rest to the weary? And now he sees how the cross, the memorial of his sufferings, becomes the symbol of grace, at the sight of which the weary find rest, and the heavy-laden throw away their burden. He feels that he has given to men that bread of life which satisfies, not merely during the brief span of time, but which to eternity will fill them with the very fulness of God, which is in Him. And the fruits of his travail are as immeasurable in space as their efficacy is unlimited in duration; and before his view he beholds the multitude become a prey, and he numbers his subjects by nations and by races. And among his captives there are strong ones, who, after a long and desperate resistance, are at last compelled to bow the knee before him. An impetuous Saul is changed into a Paul, when his hour has come; the strong spirit of an Augustine, after he has escaped from many a net of love, is in the end forced to exclaim, “Thou art too strong for me, thou hast conquered;” and a Luther, after he has been brought to feel that his own righteousness is no better than filthy rags, at last joyfully exclaims, “Christ is my righteousness!”

Was it not blessed *thus* to die? O that one might pass away, when his last hour is come, with an “It is finished” like that upon his lips! Beloved, most of you are still in the bloom of years, and cannot realize so vividly that final goal which will terminate the mortal life of all of us. But if you do earnestly desire to die with such words as these upon your lips, if you seriously wish that your latter end may be like His, there is one thing which you must constantly keep before your view; and it is this, *that we have, every one of us, a great, a God-given work to do in life.* And the work which we have to do, is just that which Christ has accomplished before us; for our mission in the world is no other than his was, namely, to declare the name of God, according to his word, and in his spirit. All the separate tasks we have to perform in our calling, are only so many different opportunities afforded us of manifesting the name of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. If the love of God be the ruling motive in our daily life, if his will be our law, his honour our end, there will rest even upon the dullest and most trivial work we perform, a light from heaven to ennable and to glorify it; for God, who rules in us, will by our actions make himself known to men. You have not imposed upon yourselves the work of your life; it is God who has imposed it upon you. O, let this thought never slip from your mind! Seen in its light, every work in which you engage must appear great, however little in itself it may be. Every task which God has given you to perform, must be a matter of moment to you, for every such task is a

token of grace: it is something that the King of heaven and of earth has chosen us to do for him. When a man comes to do his daily task in the spirit of a faith like this, the curse which rests upon our labour is taken away, and transmuted into a blessing. We think an honour is conferred on us, when we receive a commission, however small, to discharge for some great one of the earth, just because he who gave it is so great, and we apply ourselves with alacrity and pleasure to the task he assigns us. And shall we not feel it a blessed privilege that it is permitted us to perform the work of God? Therefore I say to those of you who wish one day to be able to utter a blessed "It is finished," never for a moment let out of your thoughts the great fact, that you have a work of God to do upon the earth.

Then, even should that work call upon you for many heavy sacrifices, so long as you have before you that thought, you will be ready to make them all. Certainly, to fulfil the mission which Christ has appointed us, is no easy task. If any one of you fancy he is engaged in performing it, and has hitherto found it easy, if he imagines it to be a process that can go on altogether independently of any care on his part, that man has, I fear, never known what his mission really is. He who has never spent sleepless nights and wept bitter tears over the problem of his destiny, over the mission given him to accomplish, has never yet rightly understood that problem, and is still in ignorance concerning even the true nature of that mission. In some passages of the Bible, our Lord speaks

with awful earnestness of the difficulty of this work; and, certain I am, there are many who now go unconcerned, imagining themselves to be very good Christians, who, were their eye suddenly to light upon one of those passages, would be struck with terror and exclaim, “If *that* be required in order for a man to be a Christian, *we* cannot all be Christians.” We read that Jesus on one occasion, when much people accompanied him, knowing that, in that large multitude, there was but a small number of his true spiritual followers, exclaimed, “If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” He has himself laid down this condition. The privilege of being his disciple must be so prized by us, that we are ready to deny all, yea, even that which we hold dearest, if it form an obstacle in the way of our fellowship with him, and thus prevent our attaining the object, and accomplishing the work of life. And so earnestly would he impress us with this truth, that he seeks to bring it home to us by a parable: “Which of you,” he says, “intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish.” (Luke xiv. 28–30.) The Christian’s work is something great and arduous, it is compared to the building of a tower. Its completion demands great sacrifices; but he must be prepared to

make them all. He must show himself ready to give up all that he has, all that he can, in order to secure its completion. All that remains in us of the old man must be given over to death, that the new man may rise again in life. Is not our daily task to surrender unto death our own will, our own wishes, in order that we may receive them back again from God, sanctified and holy? The sacrifices are hard indeed, self-renunciation is a grievous thing for flesh and blood; but the work is great, and when completed, it will form a temple for God himself; and it will be sweet to be able at the end to say, "It is finished." Therefore, courage in the fight!

Courage in the fight!—Let us draw our strength and our consolation from the Saviour's words, "It is finished." It is easy to fight when the general himself leads on to the battle. And we have a Saviour who is called the Captain of our salvation, because he marches in the van. Like us, it was through many sufferings that he was made perfect, that he might bring many sons into glory. Cast your eye on him when ye are weary: see, he goes before not only as your leader, but also conquering for you. He who keeps ever before his soul the cross of his Lord, his hours of suffering, his "It is finished," feels a new power stream into his being. And when his knees grow weak, Jesus holds him up: when his head droops, Jesus raises it. Let me then venture upon the conflict, with all its sacrifices; when I shall have fought it out, how blessedly I shall rest! And in the struggle, let his "It is finished" be my consolation as well

as my strength. When my last hour draws near, I shall find my consolation in him. Conscience will indeed have just ground to accuse me. I ought, more readily, more regardless of consequences, to have borne the cost of building a temple for my Lord, I ought more freely and more fully to have given up for his sake all that I possessed; alas, in myself I shall not be able to cry with joy, "It is finished." But, blessed be God, what belongs to the Head belongs also to the members. His life is mine, his sufferings are mine, and mine too will be his victory. Not with my feeble, tremulous, and broken voice, no, but with His, strong, full-toned, and firm, will I raise my joyful cry, "It is finished!"

## SERMON XV.

## THE DEATH OF JESUS, AND ITS EFFECTS.

LUKE xxiii. 46-48.—And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now, when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned.

BELOVED in Christ:—This day we are to see Jesus die. The death of a human being is a deeply-moving scene. What a solemn aspect life presents when we view it standing by the death-bed of a departing spirit! Seen thus, how important, how momentous does it appear, and with what a strange foreboding does one cast a glance into the mysterious new life which is about to open! Let us then approach the scene of our Saviour's death with deep reverence, and in a spirit of serious thoughtfulness. We have found the moment in which he cried “It is finished” to have been a moment of great consolation and blessedness for us: to him it was a moment of deep internal conflict. But no sooner had Jesus said it than his soul became once more perfectly serene; and as we listen to those last words, in which he so calmly gives up his spirit into the hands of his Father, and then behold him bow his head and die, we feel as if we had witnessed a glorious sunset, and stood gazing in solemn awe into the clear, calm heaven, still bright with a celestial radiance.

*"And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost. Now, when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. And all the people that came together to that sight, beholding the things which were done, smote their breasts, and returned."* (Luke xxiii. 46-48.)

In meditating upon these words, I would direct your attention, first, to the manner of Jesus' death, and then to its effects. He dies with a sense of *inward freedom*, with clearest consciousness, with fullest assurance. And the effect of his death upon the spectators is, that it *quickens the pious*, and, at the same time, *terrifies the ungodly*.

Jesus dies with a sense of *inward freedom*. The Bible speaks of the bondage of death. It represents death as an unrelenting tyrant, who is ever goading men on, and urging them whither they would not. Does not a dying man present the aspect of one vanquished and subdued by some despot, does not the sad spectacle at once suggest to us the idea of a bondage and servitude under which humanity lies? There we see the powers of life which, especially when it is youth that is falling a prey to the destroyer, arise, as against a strong oppressor, and give him battle. The spirit feels itself bound by so many ties, and friendship and love hold fast in their embrace the precious treasure of which death seeks to rob them. What a sad impression does a death-bed give of the bondage of man, how painfully does it

bring home to us the fact that man is not free, that he is in servitude to death! Hence men have given death a sceptre and a sword, have put a scythe into his hand and a crown upon his head. But in the death of our Lord we see nothing of all this. Very different is his death from ours. When death comes upon us, it generally takes us by surprise, and herein too does it prove its might in that it makes men its captives and its prey, before ever they are aware of its approach. In most cases, death administers a sleeping-draught before he deals the final blow; and it is in a state of sleep and of dreaminess that by far the greater proportion of the dying go their way into that long slumber. But when death came to Jesus, it found him waking. By this he would show us, that he does not give way to death, as to a superior might. As, previously, he had encountered his betrayer in the garden with the words, "I am he whom ye seek;" so does he now confront the last enemy. And in the conflict he proves victorious. "No man taketh his life from him; he layeth it down." With a solemn declaration he himself surrenders his spirit into the hands of his Father. Do we not feel, in contemplating this scene, as if we saw a victorious general, at the close of a hard-fought but glorious campaign, lay down, of his own free will, his marshal's baton? How regal is the impression it conveys!—And let me here remind you, to what an apparent chance it is we owe it, that we see Jesus die in such a kingly way. Only imagine for a moment that the death your Saviour died had been by stoning;

that he had succumbed beneath the stones which an infuriated and blood-thirsty mob hurled against him! What an insufferable impression of constraint, of a necessity of yielding to a superiority of mere brute force, would such a scene leave upon the mind! And yet such was the death that awaited him, if the high-priest had succeeded with the governor, in carrying through his charge of blasphemy. It was only because they did not succeed in this, and because they were obliged, in consequence, to alter the charge from one of blasphemy to one of civil rebellion, that the Roman death of crucifixion was the sentence pronounced upon the Saviour. And thus did it happen, according to the eternal counsel of Him, whom all events obey, that we now behold Him who lived as a king, like a king encounter death, even upon the tree of shame.

Christ dies with the *clearest consciousness*. He is perfectly conscious of what lies before him. There are times in the life of every man, even of him who has forgotten God, when he thinks almost involuntarily of the Sovereign Disposer of all events. Now the death of a man is such a season, in which scarcely any one can escape the influence of this thought. A death-bed without the thought of God!—we can scarcely endure the idea. And yet there do occur such death-beds even among ourselves; and it is a frightful thought, that even those who witness such death-beds remain unimpressed, unsolemnized! I may surely take it for granted, that there is not one here present who would think without shuddering of a godless

death-bed. And I may also take for granted, that in the case of no one of you the thought of God will be wanting amid all the thoughts and anxieties of the last moments of your life. Would I could feel likewise confident that this thought will then engage your whole soul—that it will be your *last* thought—that with which you close your earthly life! Would that the experience of each of you in that hour may be this, that when all earthly lights have faded from your view, God, as a great sun, will fill the eye of your soul! What a genial warmth would then be shed upon the cold last hour!—how would the thought of God bridge the gulf which separates time from eternity! Even Christ had thoughts of his own in the closing hours of his life: he thought on his people; he thought on all the past of his earthly history. But when the last moment came, the thought with which he bowed his head was the thought of God. He died with a clear consciousness of what lay before him. The idea that the spirit of man descends into the dust along with his body, is one which is only too natural to the human mind. How many nations have imagined that the last home and final resting-place of the spirit is to be found nowhere else but down in the deep, dark bosom of the earth; that thither all human ways do ultimately lead—thither, where all is so gloomy and so sad! We, to whom the light of Christ has appeared, know better; but can we always *believe* as we know? Or do we not sometimes, as it were, against our will, look upon that cold, dark, and narrow grave into which they let down the mantle of our spirit, as an

emblem of that place to which the spirit itself must go? Do not some who call themselves Christians even re-echo the melancholy words—

The grave is deep and silent,  
Its border dark with gloom;  
An unknown country lies beyond  
The blackness of the tomb.

But Christ does not look downwards when his last moment arrives. His eye is turned upwards to the Father's bosom from whence he came—with clear consciousness he looks into that which lies before him.

He dies with *the fullest assurance*. This is testified by his dying cry. He knows that it is into the hands of the Father that he is giving up his spirit. We are not, God be praised! without instances of blessed death-beds among ourselves. Cases do occur among us in which, while death opens wide his jaws, the dying soul is able, with a cleansed conscience and a heart full of faith, to throw itself into the Father's arms, and to shout for joy when all around are weeping: such grace has Jesus won for his faithful followers. Yet it is but rarely that a death-bed is the scene of such glorious triumph. And not the least dreadful of the terrors of death is the thought, that often the internal accuser, which slumbered in the time of sunshine, now in the hour of darkness awakes again. This occurs not only in the case of those who know not the Saviour—it is sometimes the experience even of true believers. Perhaps the increasing darkening of consciousness, the oppression of the heart,

the struggle of nature ere it will consent to give up the mortal coil, may have something to do in causing this; but much more is it to be ascribed to the anticipation of presently beholding face to face that great Being whom the spirit knows to be the Judge of the heart and of the life. The soul is standing before the curtain which conceals that judgment-seat which has ever exercised a mighty influence upon his life—well then may it feel anxious and alarmed! Rich indeed must be the measure of a man's faith, before, in view of that judgment-seat, he can exclaim, “I know that my Redeemer liveth!” and thus calm the anxious tumult of his breast. But consider, ye Christians—even should also your last hours be darkened with such clouds of sorrow—still, I beseech you, consider at least to what you have a *right* in your dying hour. Your Lord has won for you the right with him to say, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Behold, here, with what confident assurance even the prodigal son may die, if he have again returned to his father's house, and there been graciously received. It is a child that has been disobedient in many ways, who dies—and he dies in the knowledge that he is going to his Father. The way lies through regions beset with hostile powers, and the land to which he journeys is a land unknown; yet, full of confidence, he ventures to commit his spirit to a strong hand. Truly there are many who care not to live the Christian's life, but few indeed are they who would not die the Christian's death.

Such a death cannot be without effect upon those

who witness it. *It will quicken the pious and susceptible: it will awe the hard-hearted and ungodly.* When the centurion of the Roman guard saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, “Truly this was a righteous man,” or, as Matthew tells us, “Truly this was the Son of God.” And so even that Roman soldier cannot remain an unmoved spectator of such a death, and the peace of a nature reconciled to God, which breathes in the words, “Into thy hands I commend my spirit,” touches even him. The man who, condemned by an earthly tribunal, fears not the tribunal of God; who, sentenced by an earthly judge, can still undauntedly commit himself and his cause into the hands of God; that man dies as a righteous man, either as one who has been unrighteously condemned, or as one who is justified by grace. We may believe that the thief on the cross died thus. Doubtless after the King of the heavenly kingdom had pointed out to him the place in that kingdom which was reserved for him, when his hour was come, he departed in peace, saying perhaps also, after the example of his Saviour, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” But if the exclamation of the centurion was, “Truly this was the Son of God,” then the impression produced upon him was not one occasioned only by the fear of God which he saw in Christ. No; he was impressed by the calm resignation, by the royal dignity of Jesus; he learned to give its right interpretation to the darkness which had drawn round the cross; he recognized in him the righteous man whom not only his own conscience had

vindicated, but whom the Lord of nature himself had pronounced righteous. And thus did the cross of Christ proclaim, that where earthly justice had ceased to discharge its office, there was still an avenger of innocence in heaven, there was still a righteous God who acquits when men condemn.

And that very scene, the effect of which was to quicken the susceptible and God-fearing, likewise served to terrify and alarm the indifferent and God-forgetting. The people had gone to the place of execution only to gape and to stare. They had, with guilty thoughtlessness, cried, "Crucify him, crucify him!" And as he whom they had crucified, in dying, commended his soul to God, as God himself from heaven pronounced his acquittal, they had something more to do than merely look on—they must think—they must feel strange presentiments. The light of Jesus' life went out with so bright a flame, that some reflection of it fell upon their benighted hearts, and imparted to them some suspicion of the real nature of the deed they had in thoughtlessness committed; while, on the other hand, the darkness around the cross taught them what deeds like these deserve.

It is a sublime death. It gives us a foretaste of the coming triumph and glory of Christ, as the faint trembling light upon the horizon which heralds the rising sun. And now let us turn our glance from the death of Jesus to that of his children, which often bears some traces of the glory of his. It is true, death comes most frequently to men as a yoke of servitude to which they must submit. With anxiety they listen to

the approaching steps of the grim tyrant, with horror they see him brandish his awful scythe, and in unconsciousness do they receive his final stroke. Few indeed are the men who die because they would, and not because they must! Now what is a necessity of nature, faith has the power of transforming into a free, spontaneous act. "What my God wills, I will!" thus speaks the child of God, and so goes of his own free will into the terrors of death. There is sometimes upon the death-bed of the philosopher such a death accompanied with a sense of inward freedom. Possessed of the power of transforming by thought what is a necessity of nature into a reasonable necessity, he submits himself to that with free self-determination—so they teach in their schools. How often they put this philosophy in practice upon their death-beds, we do not here inquire. But even if they do, still they cannot thus die a *happy* death. Ye who, in your closing hour, can commend your spirit into no other hands but the power of nature, *ye* cannot die a happy death; and yet it is only he who dies happy that can be said to die with inward freedom. Calmly and peacefully a philosopher may die, for O, that iron necessity which alone in his last hours he views, has a fearful power to make the heart rigid, cold, insensible, so that it holds out unperturbed to the very last. But happy death-beds, I say, are to be seen only among the children of God. Only among those men are they to be seen, who in the full assurance of faith can say, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Ye philosophers, into whose hands, I

ask, do *ye* commend your spirits? To that cold necessity, which upon its eternally-revolving wheel of destiny, takes up your spirits, and, after it has wheeled them round a little time, lets them drop again, knowing and caring nothing about them or you—say, can you commend your spirits into its icy arms, and die happy? It is impossible. He alone can die happy, because he alone can die with freedom, who, as the child of God, can commend his spirit into his Father's hands.

To die with perfect consciousness, like Jesus, is, indeed, a privilege which is not granted to every child of God; and it is this that makes death so sad, if not to him who suffers, at least to the relatives and friends who stand by. To witness a Christian die, fully conscious and self-possessed, is such a sublime and elevating scene! You see the soul, as it were visibly pass away from the chamber of sickness, shuffling off its mortal coil, and putting on its robes of light. Whereas when there is no such clear consciousness in the moment of death, you can but follow with the eye of faith the parting spirit, which, as it vanishes away, a cloud conceals from your sight. And yet, even in such a case, the power of a believing heart is great. Sometimes the soul of the dying Christian is seen, by the strength of a faith whose power and depth were till then unknown, to rend the thickest cloud of mortal darkness with the loud clear cry, “I know that my Redeemer liveth;” and thus has it proved, that although the cloud could dim the vision of the soul, it could not extinguish it.

And when, if this, also, is in the last hour to be denied, the Christian has still the consolation, that before he enters upon the final conflict he may renew his covenant with God, and, in the holy sacrament of the Supper, draw strength and refreshing from communion with the Father and the Son; and then, possessed of a sacred pledge of which the power of death cannot rob him, descend into the darksome hour. And surely there are many here who could tell how great a consolation, yea, a triumph, that last Lord's Supper has proved to their departing friends, and also to them who partook with them of the sacred symbols of dying love. And did not the blessed calm and the strong confidence of victory which that solemn hour brought with it, remain even in the gloomy unconscious hours which succeeded, when the eye of the loved one grew dim?

And the full assurance on a bed of death with which Christ commanded his spirit to his Father, he grants in mercy to his children also. This is the glory of the Christian's death: for this has many a one wished to die the death of the righteous, who never wished to live his life. Those who have no Redeemer, still feel a dim expectation of an eternity beyond this earth. For mankind is of a divine origin, and this feeling is a memory of his primal state. But the *certainty* of an eternity, the certainty of an eternity of blessedness, founded upon the rights of adoption into the family of God, is the privilege of those who are the children of God by faith in his Son Jesus Christ, and of them only. We do not indeed, as I

already remarked, see this confidence always come prominently into view in its full glory, even in the children of God, but some participation in it every true Christian must have. Clouds of earth may often intervene and break its rays, and the light of heavenly joy may often fade away from the features, but that peace which passeth understanding shall still preserve the heart.

Therefore it is that the death-beds of believers have ever proved an alluring voice to the unbelieving, a consolation to the weak, an arousing call to the indifferent. Every one among you who has stood by such a death-bed, will testify to the fact that it leaves a blessing behind for the whole of man's future life; and in witnessing such a scene, if you have not felt that it is worth while to be a Christian in order to live happily, you have at least felt it worth while being a Christian in order to die happily. Hence what blessings does he who has the cure of souls reap from this part of his labours. Truly at such death-beds the conscientious clergyman learns more than he teaches, receives more than he can give. Like the cross of his Lord, the death-bed of the Christian speaks consolation to the weak, awakening to the indifferent, but, at the same time, it lifts up its warning voice against the hardened and the God-forgetters. When they see even the righteous man engaged in such sore conflict with the terrors of death, they are forced to exclaim, "If these things be done in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" And as they see how, in this hardest of all struggles,

victory is given to faith alone, they must cry, "Who shall deliver *me* from the body of this death?" Yes; many a hardened sinner, like the people at the cross of the dying Jesus, has turned from the death-bed of the departing Christian, and has smitten upon his breast, as, filled with many dark forebodings, he thought upon his own last hour.

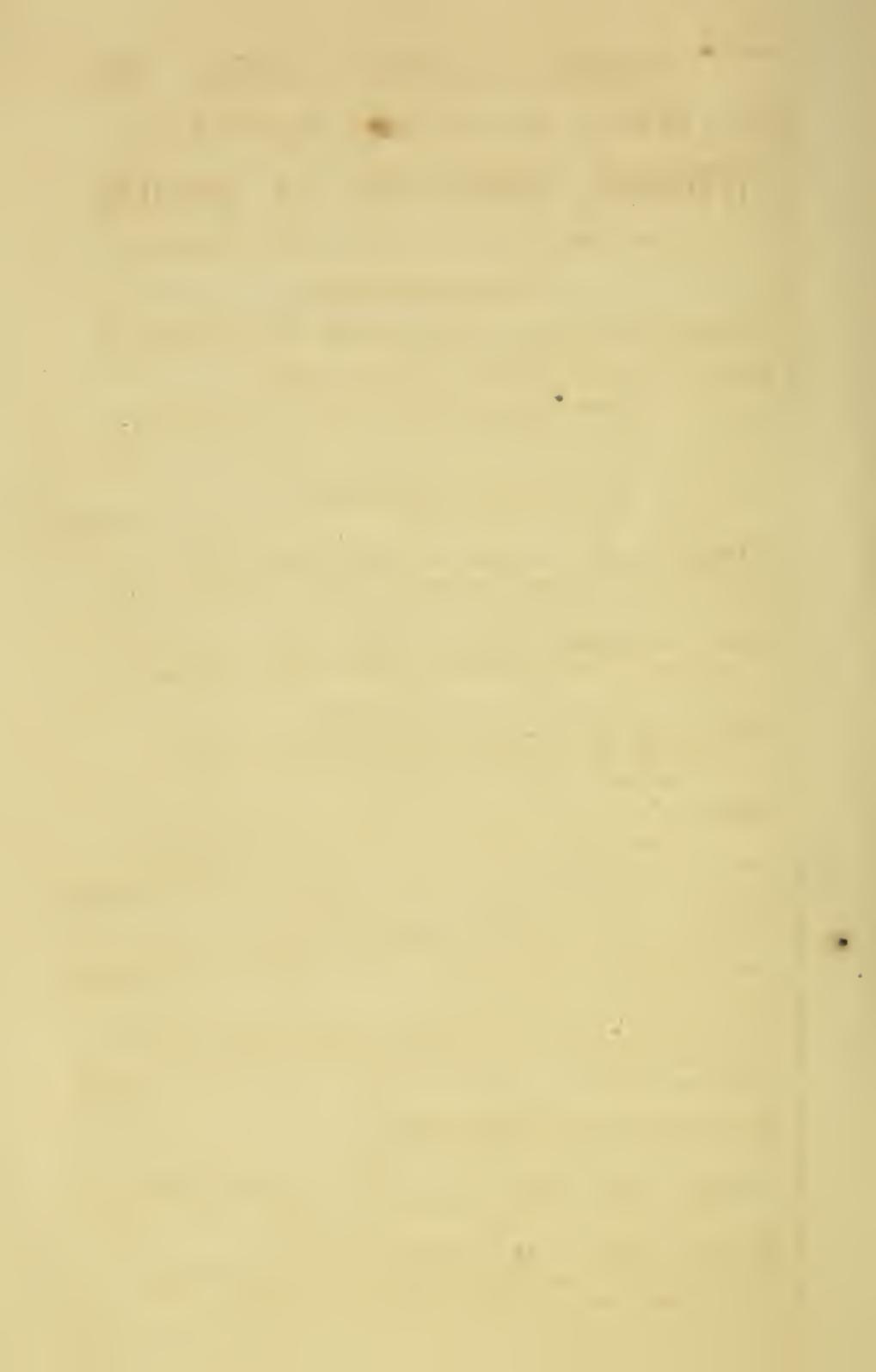
O Father of eternal love!  
Look from thy throne in heaven above,  
And O! my Rock and Refuge prove,  
When the dark waters round me be.

O, strengthen then my feeble faith,  
And make me conqueror in death,  
To sing, even with my parting breath:  
Death has no sting for me!

I fear thee not, thou cruel foe,  
Though fierce thy rage; for well I know  
Whither my ransomed soul shall go  
When falls my earthly day.

The quiet grave my woes shall end;  
My soul I'll calm to God commend,  
And to the land of light shall wend  
My angel-guided way!

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